Catholic Sermons

J. B. Bagshawe

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Catholic Sermons

A SERIES ON FAITH AND MORALS.

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BY

VERY REV. JOHN B. BAGSHAWE, D.D.,

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(IN TWO VOLUMES).

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

BY HIS EMINENCE THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER.

THE present Volume is the first of a series of "CATHOLIC SERMONS," which has been begun by the REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE. It contains Thirty Sermons on the Commandments. These Sermons are to be followed up by other courses of instruction and devotion. The object of this work is to provide explanations and instructions in the Catholic faith to be published every week at a very cheap rate.

This is a work of no little difficulty. It requires some courage to begin it, and a good deal more to carry it on. It is hard to make such a work extensively known amongst Catholics, and harder to get people to take it up with zeal and diligence; and, when this has been done, it is harder still to get them to persevere after the first interest of excitement is over.

Our best and most useful undertakings have generally been arduous and disappointing; and we must be prepared for difficulties in any good works that we attempt. What is everybody's duty is nobody's duty, and this is only too well exemplified in such an undertaking as this.

Certainly it is the duty of every priest to make sermons, and the duty of every Catholic, priest and layman, as far as opportunity allows, to spread the knowledge of the faith amongst the ignorant; and yet it is hard to find people whose heart is in the work of spreading the Word of God systematically amongst the poor, not of one locality, but of the whole nation, and who are ready to give the labour necessary for such a work.

These Sermons are of restricted length—as short, that is, as is compatible with giving detailed religious instruction—and they are written in plain and intelligible English of the nineteenth century. Language is in a perpetual flux, and the English of the last century—in which many of our standard religious books are written—is already stiff and unusual to us, and, indeed, sometimes almost unintelligible to the poor.

It is of the greatest possible importance to the spread of religion that there should be a Catholic press speaking the language of the people, and putting the Word of God before them in their mother tongue—not occasionally, but constantly, week after week, and, if it could be done, day after day. If we were more numerous, or perhaps more watchful and enterprising, with our unbounded facilities for printing, we might sow truth broadcast over the field in which the enemy has so long sown his tares.

This is done in all Catholic countries, and it is high time to bestir ourselves to carry out the same work in England, however great may be the difficulties in our way. Our Lord did not think only of the bread which perisheth when He said: "I have compassion on the multitude because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat" (St. Matt. xv. 32). It is His will that we should break the bread of life to the little

ones of His flock, and, if possible, to those who are without the fold; and, if we strive to do this, we cannot fail to bring a blessing on our country and ourselves.

The present Volume of Sermons is a beginning of such a work, and, as such, I recommend it to the Catholics of England, both clergy and laity. If this attempt is generously supported, and zealously followed up, by those amongst us who have intelligence, means, and influence, it cannot fail to do good service.

I therefore desire to sanction the work, and pray that God may bless abundantly all those who exert themselves to promote it.

HENRY EDWARD,

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

Westminster, Nov. 1. 1881.

PREFACE.

THIS edition of "CATHOLIC SERMONS" is a reprint of a set which appeared some years ago. These Sermons came out originally every week, and were sold at the doors of a good many churches through the country. The publication began in March, 1881, and the issue was continued for nearly two years. The object of the undertaking was to provide a course of instruction and religious reading for Catholics, particularly for those who are not often able to hear sermons in church, and, at the same time, to give a plain account of the Catholic faith suitable for Protestants.

There is much need of such instruction, because one of the great difficulties we have to contend with amongst our fellow-countrymen is their extreme ignorance of the doctrines of the Church, or, rather, their false and distorted ideas of what we Catholics really do believe. If we could only get them to *understand* the Catholic faith, it would be comparatively easy to lead them to embrace it.

To be sure, we have a great number of excellent controversial works, but, in the nature of things, these have rather the effect of making us appear to be always on the defensive. We are continually defending or explaining something which is attacked, refuting this or that calumny,

answering some difficulty or other, so that to many minds, the Catholic religion appears to be made up of a few controverted points and not much else. To some, for example, it seems to mean the Sign of the Cross, Miracles, Indulgences, and the "Hail Mary," and they have not a notion of the full, complete, and intelligible teaching, on all subjects, which the Church provides for us.

The idea of "CATHOLIC SERMONS" was to leave controversy altogether, and to explain, as clearly as possible, all the doctrines of the Church, and to do this week after week, putting the same truths before the people again and again, in different forms. Such an exposition, it was thought, would have a greater effect with the people at large than the most telling controversy.

It was, perhaps, an ambitious scheme. No one could carry on such a work very long by himself, and, accordingly, I hoped that many other priests would assist me in preparing and distributing the Sermons.

A few of the clergy joined me, and gave very valuable help in the enterprise—for which I was, and am, very grateful. Still, the work remained substantially my own. The weekly issue of Sermons continued till January, 1883, and then stopped for want of funds.

I hope and believe, however, that some good was done by the Sermons; the circulation at one time was very considerable, and, ever since, there has been a demand for them, so that the sale of the three-volume edition still continues.

That edition is now exhausted, and was never very satisfactory, which, considering that the Sermons were printed to be sold in penny numbers, is not wonderful. I am, therefore, publishing a new edition in two volumes, and in doing so, I propose to alter the arrangement a little, and I shall only reprint my own Sermons.

I do not think it necessary to republish the Sermons of my friends now that the series has ceased, and, indeed, I do not think that I should have any right to do so; moreover, they do not exactly fall into the plan of instruction which I had arranged.

The Sermons may substantially be divided into three courses—the first, on the Articles of the Creed, which contains thirty-two Sermons; the next, on the Commandments, containing also thirty-two; and the last, on the Sacraments, in which there are eighteen Sermons; making eighty-two in all. Some of these were written for particular Feasts, but they seem to fall into their places tolerably well.

To this edition I have prefixed a Preface by His Eminence Cardinal Manning—a preface which he kindly allowed me to place at the beginning of my first volume.

I cannot help here referring to the constant kindness and cordiality with which His Eminence supported my undertaking.

Whatever success these Sermons have had is largely due to his support, and the kindness of many good friends amongst the clergy and laity.

J. B. BAGSHAWE.

Richmond, March, 1898.

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SERMON I.

The Word of God.

" To-day, if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts " (Ps. xciv. 8)

In this day's Gospel, my dear brethren, our Lord tells us of the dispositions with which we are to hear the Word of God and how we are to make it fruitful in our hearts. " The seed is the Word of God;" and our Lord describes how the sower goes forth to sow the seed, and the different kinds of ground on which it falls. Nothing can be more appropriate to the holy season of Lent which is coming, since the Word of God is then scattered with unusual abundance. It is His will that it should produce fruit a hundredfold, but it will not do so unless we are ready to receive it.

And, first, we must love and prize the Word of God. The Psalmist says: " My soul hath longed greatly to desire Thine ordinances at all times " (Ps. cxviii. 20). We, too, if we would be good Christians, must " long greatly " to hear the voice of God speaking to us. The reason, perhaps, that it so seldom speaks to us is that we have no great desire to hear ; or, at any rate, if we loved it more, we should hear it more clearly and fully. The Holy Scripture tells us of times when the voice of God was but little heard : " And the Word of the Lord was precious in those days, there was no manifest vision " (I. Kings iii. 1). And this, perhaps, was because men did not care to hear it. May we not fear that it is sometimes scarce with us because we do not love it as we ought?

Listen to the way in which the Psalmist describes his own love for the Word of God : " How have I loved Thy law, O Lord ; it is my meditation all the day long;" " How sweet are Thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth;" " The law of Thy mouth is good unto me above thousands of gold and silver;" " Therefore have I loved Thy commandments above gold and the topaz " (Ps. cxviii. 72, 97, 103, 127). How much greater should *our* love be, since, in the New Law, our God has spoken to us so much more clearly and lovingly!

" Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths " (Ps. cxviii. 105). In all our real necessities God's

revelation is the only true and trustworthy guide; it is the "light shining in a dark place," and all other lights will lead us astray. Those who trust to their own reason, or to the wisdom of men, are sure to go wrong, "for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (I. Cor. iii. 19). From the Word of God comes all good fruit. It is the good seed which is sown in our hearts, without which there can be no harvest, and which in itself contains all possible excellence: to it we may apply the words of the Book of Wisdom: "All good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands" (Wisd. vii. 11).

Let us ponder upon what St. Paul tells us of the power of God's word: "The Word of God," he says, "is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirits, of the joints also and the marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). It has in itself a vitality which nothing can extinguish; it has a power which is capable of producing the most marvellous effects, and contains in itself a richness and fertility able to produce abundant fruit even in the barren and poor soil of the human heart. How is it, then, that it does so little in us? Is it not because we do not love God's Word, or seek after it, or trust it as we ought?

The Word of God is spoken to us in many different ways, if only we listen to hear it: it comes to us through a number of human channels, and sometimes we think chiefly of the forms, which speak to the external senses, and too little of the voice of God which is conveyed by them.

The most formal and distinct way in which God speaks to us is by His Holy Church. Her teaching is the unerring Word of God, which can never fail: "He that heareth you heareth Me." Our Lord established His Church on earth expressly to be the guardian and interpreter of His doctrine, and it is by her teaching alone that we can, with certainty, distinguish the true and certain Word of God from the opinions of men. "And the Word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'What seest thou Jeremias?' and I said, 'I see a rod watching.' And the Lord said to me, 'Thou hast seen well, for I will watch over My word to perform it.'" (Jer. i. 11). The Lord watches over the word which He has trusted to His Church; His rod of guidance, His staff of support, is with her constantly. No matter how weak her members may be in themselves—no matter how great may be the difficulties the waywardness of men may place in her path, she will always be strong and unerring in the performance of that work which her Founder gave her to do. He will

"watch over His word to perform it." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

In the teaching of the Catholic Church the Word of God is the constant and unerring guide of His people: it is like the pillar of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, which went before the children of Israel on their journey through the desert. God spoke to them from time to time in many ways; but He gave them also a constant guidance and direction to which they might always refer: so with us; in addition to the many inspirations which He vouchsafes to us, He has established a permanent and visible channel by which His word may come to us with authority.

If, then, my dear brethren, you are lovers of the Word of God, the first thing to do is to be diligent in learning and obeying the voice of the Church. No private inspirations, no words of men, however holy or wise they may seem to be, can ever approach in authority to the teaching of the Church. Notwithstanding this, however, there are a great many people who take very little interest in the doctrine of the Church; they learn it just so far as is absolutely necessary, but want to know no more. They learn their faith as children, but, when childhood is over, they do not care to make any further study of it. In other things they go on learning all their lives, and are constantly acquiring new information—but they have no taste for studying the voice of our Lord speaking to men in the teaching of His Church.

"The words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and shall move between thy eyes, and thou shalt write them in the entry and on the doors of thy house" (Deut. vi. 6). This was the sort of love for God's Commandments, which was enjoined upon the Jews—and, certainly, our love and value for the voice of God ought not to be less than theirs.

You must, then, show your value for the Word of God by assiduity in learning all that the Church teaches you about your faith and practice; and this study ought, in a sense, to be the work of your lifetime. You ought always to be doing something to keep up this knowledge, either by reading, or hearing instructions in your religion. "And thou shalt tell them to thy children." It is marvellous to see the little anxiety which parents manifest for the religious instruction of their children: they will make any sacrifice to give them a good education in

other things, and yet grudge the time and the pains necessary for providing them with a complete and accurate knowledge of the truths of faith and the practices of religion. If you show this negligence, can you be said to love and prize the Word of God?

But the Word of God comes to us in another way—by reading the Holy Scriptures, which are the "written word." The Catholic Church has ever been the guardian and lover of these inspired writings; by her authority they were collected and put before the faithful as the "Word of God," and she alone is the authorized interpreter of them.

It is true, the Church does not encourage the indiscriminate reading of the Bible, and the reason of this is manifest. A large part of the Bible is made up of the laws of the Jews and their history; it contains the account of their sins, and the threatenings and visitations of God's anger upon them, and much of this is not suited either for the instruction or the devotion of Christians generally, however necessary it may be for theologians. Because the Catholic Church does not want these things to be read by everybody, her enemies say that she does not wish her children to study the Holy Scriptures at all; but let us hear what the Pope says:

"At a time that a vast number of bad books, which most grossly attack the Catholic religion, are circulated even among the unlearned, to the great destruction of souls, you judge exceedingly well that the faithful should be excited to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, for these are the most abundant sources which ought to be left open to every one, to draw from them purity of morals and of doctrine, to eradicate the errors which are widely disseminated in these corrupt times. This you have seasonably effected, as you declare, by publishing the sacred writings in the language of your country, suitable to every one's capacity; especially when you show and set forth that you have added explanatory notes, which, being extracted from the holy fathers, preclude every possible danger of abuse." This is from a letter written by Pius VI. to the Archbishop of Florence in 1778, on the occasion of his publishing an Italian translation of the Bible.

It is the desire of the Church, then, that her children should be acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, or, at any rate, with those parts which treat of Christian faith and devotion. St. Peter, indeed, tells us that there are, in St. Paul's writings, "certain things, hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do, also, the Scriptures, to their own destruction" (I. St. Peter iii. 16); and this is a warning that we

are to use them with the Church as our guide—not as if each one had to find in them his own religion, but in accordance with the "faith once delivered to the saints" (St. Jude iii.).

"All Scripture inspired of God is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be furnished to every good work" (2 Tim. iii. 16). It is a great neglect, therefore, when Catholics do not, at least, read the parts of the Bible which concern them, and are suited to their spiritual condition. The life and words of our Lord in the Gospels, the preaching of the Apostles, given to us in the Acts and the Epistles, the tender devotion contained in the Psalms, and many other parts of the Bible, ought to be familiar to all who love the Word of God—at least, when they have time and opportunity for reading them.

I speak of this because, at the present day, a great many people neglect this great source of grace, and thereby shut their ears to the voice of God, which would speak to them. Every Sunday the Church reads to you portions of the Gospels and Epistles, and other parts of the Old and New Testaments, and she ordains that all her ministers shall every day read a portion of some part or other of the Bible, and in this she makes manifest her desire that her children should constantly read and meditate on the Word of God, as far as their capacity will allow: "Blessed is the man . . . whose will is in the law of the Lord, and on His law shall he meditate day and night" (Ps. i. 2). Such were the words of the Psalmist, and such is the teaching of the Catholic Church

The Word of God, however, comes to us in another way also, and that is by preaching. "Faith, then, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ" (Rom. x. 17). The Gospel is preached amongst us by the Church's command, and that outward preaching is accompanied by the Word of God addressed to our hearts. We must look upon the sermons we hear as one of the ordinary channels by which God speaks to us: no matter whether the sermon be good or bad; no matter whether the preacher be learned and eloquent, or simple and unpretending—God can make His voice heard by the one as well as by the other. "My speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human. wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and of power." (I. Cor. ii. 4). St. Paul tells us he did not trust to learning and eloquence, but to the voice of God which made itself heard by his lips. If any real good is done, it comes, not from the talent of the preacher, but from the interior grace of God which accompanies his words.

We are all apt to forget this. We run after great preachers and distinguished men, and sometimes neglect the simple teaching of the Gospel. In this way people often make listening to sermons an intellectual amusement, and think very little of the hidden word which God, perhaps, would speak to them by the lips of the most indifferent preacher. If, my dear brethren, when you went to hear sermons, you thought not of the visible preacher—to criticise him—to praise or blame him as he pleases or displeases you—but of your Lord and Master, who is going to speak His own words to your hearts by the mouth of His ministers, you would find in every sermon a source of profit.

If, then, my dear brethren, you would hear the voice of God, you must be diligent in making use of the ordinary means of instruction which He has established. You must study the teaching of God's Church—you must read and meditate on the Word of God—either directly in the Holy Scriptures themselves, or indirectly in those religious books in which the teaching of the Holy Scriptures is adapted to your particular wants; and you must be assiduous in listening to sermons and instructions, and using the other outward channels of God's Word.

But all this is insufficient if we do not prepare our hearts to receive it, and this is the particular subject of to-day's parable. Our Lord compares the hearts of men to the ground, and His Word to the seed sown in it. There is every description of soil—there is the hard ground by the roadside, and the stony ground; there is the ground choked up with weeds, and the fertile soil; there are, moreover, many different degrees of fertility, and the seed will produce fruit sparingly or abundantly according to the condition of the land.

In every congregation of Christians our Lord is the sower, sowing His seed. He sows it in all the different ways of which I have been speaking: in particular, Sunday after Sunday He scatters the seed of His Word from the altar by the voice of His priests; in every congregation, too, are to be seen the dispositions represented by these different sorts of ground. It will be well for us to consider to which class of listeners we ourselves belong. We have been for a long while hearing God's Word, and perhaps we cannot say that it has produced any great fruit. Let us, then, ask what sort of ground our hearts are. Do you think, my dear brethren, that our Lord would compare you to the stony ground, or to the ground overgrown with thorns and briars? or have you reason to hope that He would call you the good ground producing fruit a hundred-fold? It is well for us to consider this, because though the ground cannot change its

nature, we can. If we are not the good, fertile soil, it is our own fault, since the Lord not only scatters the seed, but, by His grace, enables us to prepare the ground for its reception.

"The sower went out to sow His seed. And as He sowed, some fell by the way side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it." Our Lord Himself explains this comparison thus: "They by the way side are they that hear; then the devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved."

There are, unfortunately, amongst Christians, a great many whose hearts are like the roadside: the most terrible and the most tender truths of religion are alike ineffectual. The Word of God falls, Sunday after Sunday, on their ears, but can make no impression on their hearts. They go out of the church; but, by the time they have passed the porch, they have forgotten all about it: the "birds of the air have carried away the seed." Perhaps the very moment they are out of the church they take care effectually to trample under foot the good seed, by distinct frivolity and sin; perhaps they simply allow it to lie unheeded till it perishes of itself. They have heard, it may be, a sermon which is meant by God for a special call to them: they do not even notice it. They criticize the sermon, perhaps praise its ability, and then forget all about it; but they have never once taken the trouble to consider how much of what they have heard is intended for themselves. What causes this state? It is the result of the deadness and coldness which love of the world produces. You make your heart a thoroughfare for all worldly thoughts and interests: every passion can come and go unchecked: you have no spirit of recollection, no reverence of mind, no guard upon your thoughts. Can you wonder if your heart becomes like the roadside, hard and almost incapable of receiving impressions?

"And now I will show you what I will do with my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted: I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down" (Isaias v. 5). These words but too well represent the state of many a Christian soul: the hedge and the wall, which should surround and shelter the Lord's vineyard, have been broken down: "the boar out of the wood hath laid it waste, and the wild beast hath devoured it" (Ps. lxxix. 14).

It is by dissipation of mind that we lose so much of the Word of God addressed to us. If you do not make some efforts at recollection, your mind will be like the roadside, incapable of receiving the seed of God's Word: and it is against this state that our Lord would warn us. And yet how few there are who take any pains to be recollected!

There are very few who take any great trouble to recollect themselves, or "enter into themselves," or guard against distractions, even when they come to church to hear the Word of God, and fewer still who are habitually recollected. Ask yourself individually what you do to obtain a spirit of recollection—and then consider whether our Lord might not compare your heart to the high road, and say of you: "Therefore the devil cometh and taketh the word out of his heart, lest believing he should be saved."

"And some other fell upon a rock: and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture." "Now, they upon the rock are they who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no roots, for they believe for awhile, and in the time of temptation they fall away." These words, my dear brethren, give us a wide field for thought. What is our religion?—on what does it grow?—how deep are its roots? Many people go on well for a time, and appear as satisfactory and fervent as you could wish; and then, at last, they fall away, because, as our Lord says, "they have no roots"—"they believe for awhile, but in time of temptation they fall away." It is not enough, then, to grow in the eyes of men, but we must take care that we have roots, and that they strike deep enough, and that they have hold of the true soil, otherwise our religion will soon wither away. If the tree has no roots, it cannot help itself, but we can; and it is for us to see that the seed of God's Word takes deep root in our hearts.

What are these roots? They are the real motives of all you do—the first principles from which your religious life springs. Why are you a Catholic? Why are you trying to lead a religious and regular life? A good many people never ask themselves such questions, and would, perhaps, be surprised if they knew how little real root they had in the true soil. They are not conscious of their deficiency, and may, perhaps, go on till the time of temptation comes. Let us take a few instances. One man has been a Catholic all his life; perhaps he learnt his religion superficially enough, and has thought very little about it since his childhood. His chief hold on the ground, if we may say so, is, perhaps, mere custom; he has always been a Catholic, and is used to perform certain duties, and it is chiefly that which holds him. I do not mean that he has not faith, but his faith has not taken any great hold of his understanding or his heart—he has got no roots. Should such a man suddenly be transplanted to a new country, and be surrounded by a new society, so that old associations are all swept away, who can tell that his faith will not go with it?

Again, with some, religion is largely rooted in self-interest and personal convenience. They do not suspect that such is the case, and, perhaps, would be indignant if they were to be told that they were mercenary; but so it is. A good many people come to our Lord when He has the purse, as Judas did; but they must learn to love Him disinterestedly for Himself, or they will soon desert Him. Some day a trial will come and touch their interests, and then will be seen what roots they have. Some people are held by their tastes and feelings; they like this priest, and admire that preacher, or they enjoy the ritual, and delight in the external grandeur of the Catholic worship. All this is well enough; but, then, tastes and feelings do not afford sufficient holding ground. Our Lord says: "Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me" (St. Luke vii., 23); and those who are led too much by their affections and tastes, by their love for the beautiful, and by enthusiastic feelings generally, are always in danger of being scandalized.

I am not talking as if it were possible to be Christians at all without any better roots than these, or as if, on the other hand, it were not quite right to make tastes and feelings of all sorts help in the service of religion; but I think our Lord would warn us in this parable to study more seriously to make our faith and religion strike deeper roots every day. The roots on which we can alone really rely are two—necessity and love. We must be Catholics, because it is the one thing necessary; with worldly advantages, or without them—with friends, or in spite of friends—pleasant to our tastes, or odious to them—the holy faith is the one thing which is necessary.

"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"—there we have the real ground in which religion must be rooted. If you treat your religion as a thing which you may take up or let alone—as a thing, perhaps, for which you deserve some credit—it shows that you do not sufficiently feel the absolute *necessity* of your faith, and so may be found in time of temptation to "have no roots."

Again, the root is the love of God. No love of systems or institutions, of rituals or prayer-books; no old-established names will do for one moment. Of course, for His sake, we may, and must, love His Church, His Sacraments, and all that is appointed for His worship; but it is in the love of Him alone that our religion must be rooted; "that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts, that, being rooted and founded in charity, we may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, to know also the charity of Christ which surpasseth all understanding" (Eph. iii. 17).

If your religion draws its life from these two roots—from a deep sense of the absolute and overwhelming necessity of your salvation, and a real love for God Himself, then it will never wither away: "Charity never falleth away: whether prophecies be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge be destroyed" (I. Cor. xiii. 8). It is our own fault if our religion is not so rooted. It is the characteristic of the good seed to extend its roots ever deeper into the ground, if it is allowed to do so, and the Word of God which we have received in our souls will certainly establish itself there, and grow, and send out its roots on every side, if only we will take moderate care in the cultivation of the soil of our hearts.

I have left no space, my dear brethren, for treating of the rest of the parable. I would once again call upon you to love the Word of God and to be zealous for it: to have a great confidence in it, and, as St. James says, "with meekness to receive the engrafted word which is able to save your souls." The necessary consequence of loving and trusting the Word of God is assiduity in seeking for it in all those channels by which God communicates it to you, and preparing your souls to receive it fruitfully, so that, with "a good and very good heart, you may hear the word and keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience," and so "receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (I. St. Peter i. 9).

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SERMON II.

Awakening.

"Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty" (St. Luke xxi. 27).

THE Church begins and ends each year with our Lord's account of the Last Judgment. To-day, my dear brethren, we begin the holy time of Advent, in which we are to prepare ourselves for our Lord's coming at Christmas. We are to welcome our Blessed Saviour once more in spirit, when we celebrate His birthday, and meditate again on all the tender mysteries of His infancy. If we would appreciate the loving gentleness of His first coming, let us look forward to His second coming, on that great day, which is described to us in this Gospel, when He will come with great power and majesty to judge the world.

"God shall come manifestly, our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. A fire shall burn before Him, and a mighty tempest shall be round Him. He shall call the heavens from above, and the earth, to judge His people" (Ps. xlix. 2). "Behold He cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of Him" (Apoc. i. 7). How beautiful and glorious will the Lord be on this His terrible day! The legions of bright angels who surround His throne—those who have been the ministers of His will—those who have been the guardians of His little ones on earth, will now come to judge between Him and His people. "And He will send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them" (St. Matt. xxiv. 31).

The earth, too, shall do His bidding. "He shall call the heavens from above, and the earth to judge His people." Every creature obeys Him now, even when it seems to be the servant of man: the "fire, hail, snow and ice, and stormy winds which fulfil His word" (Ps. cxlviii. 8); but then "He will sharpen His severe wrath for a spear, and the whole world shall fight with Him against the unwise. Then shafts of lightning shall go directly from the clouds: as from a bow well bent, they shall be shot out, and shall fly to the mark. And thick hail shall be

cast upon them from the stone-casting wrath: and the water of the sea shall rage against them, and the rivers shall run together in a terrible manner: a mighty wind shall stand up against them, and as a whirlwind shall divide them, and their iniquity shall bring all the earth to a desert, and wickedness shall overthrow all the thrones of the mighty" (Wis. v. 21).

But all these creatures can add nothing to His own infinite glory and power; they are but the instruments of His wrath, and their power is from Him. To Him alone we must look, and Him alone we must fear. How beautiful and how terrible will the Son of God be when men shall first behold Him as He is! "The earth saw and was moved. The mountains melted like wax before the face of the Lord; yea, all the earth at the presence of the Lord. The heavens declared His justice, and all peoples saw His glory" (Ps. xcvi. 4).

If inanimate nature thus recognizes its God, how awful will His coming be to those to whom He has given life, feeling, and understanding! How terrible will be the fear of His judgment that will come upon all hearts—"men withering away for fear"—and, at the same time, how great will be the longing which the sight of His beauty and His glory will awaken in the soul of man! Now will men see the true end for which they were made—now will they understand the real good which they had to gain.

This, my dear brethren, will be the world's awakening. It goes on now, sleeping its sleep, and dreaming its dreams; but when He comes in the clouds, "with great power and majesty," there will be a terrible awakening. The dreams of empire—the petty ambitions of men, which now seem so important; the speculations of science, and the pursuits of art, the gold and silver which are the world's idols, will all alike crumble into dust. They are dreams from which men will awaken when God shall come to judgment: "They have slept their sleep: and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands" (Ps. lxxv. 6). All those things for which they toiled so hard, and suffered so much, which were so precious in their eyes, that they were even ready to sacrifice their souls for them, have become dust in that terrible awakening.

Honours, riches, pleasures, the esteem of men—what shall we care about them all in that day? How great will be the confusion of sinners!—of the wise men of the world, who, in their wisdom, look down upon God and His servants, "saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end

without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints. Therefore, we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All these things have passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on" (Wisdom v. 3).

Such shall be the world's awakening at God's good time, and in His terrible day: but *our* awakening will not be so long delayed. "Amen I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." How many generations have passed away since these words were spoken, and are now lying mouldering in the dust under our feet? To each one have these words been fulfilled. Jews and Romans, Greeks and barbarians, have all gone to their last rest. To each one, in turn, has come the day of awakening, when the shadows of earth were dispersed; and to each human soul the Son of Man has appeared face to face, as He will one day appear to the whole race of men, when He "comes in the clouds, with great power and majesty."

Look onwards, then, my dear brethren, to the day of your own awakening; it is not very far off, and you are going on to it with unflagging steps. Day and night, through joy and sorrow, rich or poor, you never pause or weary in that journey, but go straight on. Somewhere or other there is a death-bed awaiting you; you know not where it is, but it awaits you as certainly as the bed on which you are to repose this night. It may be very near or a long way off—God knows. It may be in the very room in which you are now living, or it may be in a distant country—God knows. All that you know is that you are journeying on towards this death-bed, and that every day brings you so many steps nearer to it; that this morning you were a few steps nearer to it than yesterday, and that to-morrow you will be nearer still.

This death-bed is the bed of pain and sorrow which no man can alleviate; it is the bed from which you can never more arise, from which you will be carried to your grave; but let us think of it now as the bed on which we have to awaken from all earthly dreams.

What are the schemes and secret ambitions of your heart? Pass them in review before your eyes. Which of earth's plea-

sures do you covet most? Do you want success in life and an honoured name and distinction amongst men?—or do you covet riches to leave behind you, when you go?—or is it the enjoyment of the present moment, as it flies, which entices you? It doesn't matter; on that death-bed you will awake from them all. There, the "men of riches," and the men of ambition, and the men of pleasure, must all alike be awakened. "They have slept their sleep, and they have found nothing in their hands."

The things which looked so radiant in their dreams have become dark, and the fairy glow that surrounded them has disappeared to their waking eyes, and instead of them they now see an array of hard and terrible truths of which they hardly thought at all. In place of the dreams of time, will come the truths of eternity. Many a painful recollection of the forgotten past, many a reproach of conscience, which till now we have put on one side, will come out clearly to us, as we wake from our long sleep. Many a view of our duty, which, perhaps, we will not allow ourselves even to consider, will then be only too plain. Many an excuse, which looked like a perfect and complete justification to our slumbering senses, will then appear, in its true light, as an empty pretence.

The bed of death is the great awakener of men, because then the light of this world is fast going out, and with it all that depends on its brightness must disappear; and it is, at the same time, the dawn of a new light—the light of the eternity which is before us. It brings with it an enlightenment from the approach of Him who is at hand, whose coming will completely enlighten us, and "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of hearts."

But must we wait for this terrible awakening? Must we go on in our slumbers till they are thus fearfully dispelled? The very object of our Lord's first coming on earth is to prepare us for His second coming. He is hereafter to come in great power and majesty; and, therefore, He now comes amongst us in the humility of the stable of Bethlehem. He will then come as a Judge, and the earth shall tremble and melt away at His approach; and, therefore, now He comes in gentleness and meekness. He will then speak to all mankind with "a trumpet and a great voice;" so now he speaks secretly to the hearts of men, to prepare them for judgment.

We are now to prepare for Christmas, and we should fill our hearts with those very dispositions with which men ought to have received Him when He actually came on earth. The Church, therefore, addresses us all in St. Paul's words: "It is now the hour to rise from sleep, for now our salvation is nearer

than when we believed. The night is past, and the day is at hand; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light" (Rom. xiii. 11).

This, then, is to be for us a special time of awakening. Our Lord seems at this season to come to each one of us to arouse us, not by the terror of His judgments, but by the loving inspirations of His grace. He comes to us now in spirit, as He went to His apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane. "And He cometh to His disciples and findeth them asleep, and He saith to Peter, What! could ye not watch one hour with me? Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (St. Matt. xxvi. 40). He would arouse us now in time, that we may prepare ourselves for that great and terrible awakening. He comes now as Saviour, that then, as Judge, He may have mercy.

"And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept" (St. Matt. xxv. 5). This is the great temptation of human nature: we are all disposed to be drowsy and inert about spiritual things. The weakness of our mortality weighs down our eyelids, as it were, and the atmosphere of the world stupefies us, and the dreams of life pass before our vision, and we soon sleep. No matter how active we may be by nature; no matter where or how we are placed, we are always tempted to drowsiness in spiritual things. Men of the world in their business, priests in the sanctuary, monks and nuns in their convents—it is all the same: if we are not constantly watching and arousing ourselves, spiritual sloth creeps over us, and we sleep. It is with us as it was with the Apostles: "He cometh to them again, and findeth them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy" (St. Matt. xxvi. 43). Our Lord had only just roused them by His reproachful and tender words, and they had again fallen asleep.

We, too, my brethren, may, perhaps, have been sleeping this sleep, and we knew it not; let us, therefore, consider what is the spiritual state which is represented by sleep, and what are its dangers, that we may be careful not to let ourselves be surprised, and vigorous in arousing ourselves from it. How does this spiritual sleep show itself? What are the signs and tokens of its coming? The want of interest in spiritual things is its first mark. He who is asleep cannot judge of objects according to their true value, and therefore things precious and things worthless are alike to him; he gathers pebbles by the seashore, and thinks he is collecting pearls of price; he imagines he is laying up stores of treasure, and wakes to find "his hands empty." Look out into the world around, and what do you see? You see men everywhere passing their lives in the neglect of all the things that are really necessary; they are running after

temporal and worldly advantages, and care very little for the really priceless things which are within their reach. Every moment they might, if they would, lay up for themselves 'treasures' where neither rust nor moth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (St. Matt. vi. 20). The graces of God lie scattered around them, but they will not take the trouble to gather them up; whilst they are wearing themselves out in the pursuit of trifles. What should we say if we saw men wandering in the valley of diamonds, amidst pearls and priceless precious stones—if we saw them labouring to collect together pebbles and sand without caring for the beautiful things around them? We should say that they might be wandering in their sleep for all the good they are doing.

Would that it were only worldly people, who know no better, who acted in this way; but we find the same thing amongst ourselves. Look even at good people, and compare the diligence which they display in temporal matters, and their eagerness for worldly advantages, with the carelessness they show in using the means of grace.

This, then, is a test of the need which we have of awakening: if we are conscious that we do not care as we ought for spiritual blessings—that we are not anxious for any increase of favour with God. If we are willing to take a great deal of trouble for this world, and a very little for God, we may assure ourselves that the torpor and sleep of this world has come upon us, and we have urgent need to be aroused.

Again, when a man is overcome by drowsiness, his senses and feelings are dulled. He is insensible to his danger, however imminent it may be; he will walk on the very edge of the precipice, and take no heed of the peril. He has moreover, no affection and care for his friends, and no feeling of shame. Are not these, also, my dear brethren, the marks of spiritual sleep? Take a man who has allowed himself to get into this way; he knows his life is one of great spiritual danger, that he is living in such a way as to risk his eternal salvation, and yet he doesn't care—he is the man walking recklessly on the edge of the precipice.

Again, how dull and blunted are the feelings of men in spiritual things. Compare the warmth of tenderness and devotion which they lavish on earthly love, with the coldness and hardness of their hearts towards Almighty God. Is not the great Creator worthy of the love of His creatures?—do the men and women around us deserve so much more affection than He? Has our Lord done nothing to gain our hearts that we give Him so little of them? Oh, no; this is not the reason: we

know that we have abundant cause to give Him the whole of our hearts, and that our all is infinitely too little ; but we are drowsy in spiritual things, and therefore our feelings are dull. How little shame do men feel at the way in which they treat Almighty God ! How ungenerous and how unthankful they are to Him ! And yet they seem hardly conscious of it. If we were to treat our earthly friends as most of us treat our Creator, we should be covered with confusion, and be debased in our own eyes ; but the spiritual drowsiness which afflicts us makes us almost unconscious of what we are doing.

But, my brethren, there are many kinds of spiritual sleep ; we all, indeed, need rousing constantly, and the Apostle's words, "Arise from sleep," are addressed to us all ; but all are not in the same dangerous and deadly sleep. And first let us think of the dreadful sleep of mortal sin. Mortal sin is, as you well know, that kind of grievous and deliberate sin which makes you the enemy of God.

When a man makes up his mind to disobey, and commit a sin like this, he knows that he is guilty of a rebellion, and that he has cut himself from God's friendship and favour, and that he has changed his best friend into his enemy. When he has done this, he is ashamed and afraid : like Adam, after the first sin, he would hide himself. His eyes are opened, and his conscience reproaches him, and grace invites him to repent and return to God. He does not do so : perhaps he puts off his repentance till another time; perhaps he hardens himself against the voice of conscience ; and then comes sleep—the sleep of mortal sin. His conscience is silenced, or, perhaps, is persuaded to say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace;" and he gets accustomed to the state of sin, and indifferent about it. Then, perhaps, many other devils come, and take up their abode in his heart, and dwell therein.

Is not this a terrible sleep, my dear brethren ? Alas ! it is too common. Such a man is full of iniquity, yet he is not ashamed; he is disgraced before Almighty God and His angels, yet he keeps up a fair appearance in the sight of men—and, perhaps, in a certain way, in his own eyes. He lives in perpetual danger, and he doesn't trouble himself about it. Is not this like the man walking in his sleep on the edge of the precipice ?

It is not that he doesn't really *know* his state : that might be some excuse. Take the condition of a well-instructed Catholic. He knows perfectly well what mortal sin is, and what are its consequences : he would not attempt to deny that he is living in mortal sin, and that he is, therefore, the enemy of God : he knows that he is like a barren tree in the Lord's vineyard, which

can produce no good fruit. So long as he remains in that condition, all his labour is in vain. He may pretend to pray, and strive to do good works, but so long as he persists in cherishing mortal sin he can do *nothing* that is acceptable to God. All this he knows quite well. He knows, moreover, that he is in the greatest possible danger; he may die any day or hour, and if he dies as he is now living—in a state of rebellion against God—he will be lost for ever.

These thoughts, however, do not trouble him, because of the lethargy of sleep into which he has fallen. He hears the truths, which he knows so well, repeated again and again; he cannot deny them, but he gives no heed. He is called upon to repent, and shown how easy it is for him to return, by the help of God's grace. Yes, he knows that; but he will not stir, and all the warnings and entreaties that are made to him, in God's name, pass by him as idle words O God! when will this man's day of awakening come? Will it be in time, or too late? Will it be on his death-bed, or when he stands before God in judgment?

But this sleep of mortal sin is not the only kind of sleep. There are a great many people who generally keep out of mortal sin, and yet greatly need arousing in spiritual matters. Tepidity is a kind of sleep. Those who are lukewarm are in a state offensive to God and very dangerous to themselves; and the worst of it is, that they are sometimes very well satisfied with themselves, and, perhaps, think they are doing a great deal. They have not the least notion of what they are like in the eyes of God: then let us see what our Lord says Himself: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot! But because thou art lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of Me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich, and mayest be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear: and anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see" (Apoc. iii. 15).

Is it possible that we deserve this terrible rebuke?—and, if so, is it possible that we are unconscious of it? Yes, my dear brethren, I am afraid we must admit that this, too, is the consequence of the sleep that comes upon us. The man to whom these words were addressed thought himself "rich and made wealthy, and having need of nothing." This was because the state into which he had fallen prevented him from seeing

clearly. If he could have seen clearly and measured justly, he would never have been so deceived; but he was in a state of spiritual sleep.

What is tepidity? When can people be said to be in that tepid condition—neither hot nor cold—which is so offensive in the sight of God? A man is tepid if he continues indeed to serve God, but does so in an indifferent, cold-hearted way, without any generosity or enthusiasm: he wants *just* not to be a castaway, but does not care for anything else. A man who is tepid is indifferent about spiritual things: he is like the Jews in the desert who murmured, and turned against the manna which God had given them from heaven. They said: "Our soul now loatheth this very light food."

This indifference to spiritual things is a very great offence before God, since it comes from our own fault. If you do not relish them, what is the reason? It is simply because you have become negligent and slothful. When a person is working hard, and taking pains in the service of God, he always has the proper value for spiritual things; but the moment he begins to despise little things, and to take but little trouble over religious duties, his relish for piety begins to turn to distaste. One who is tepid thinks very little of venial sins: he calls them small sins, and does not think them worthy of much attention: he knows very well that these sins come, as a cloud, between him and Almighty God, but he doesn't care: he is too cold and ungenerous to be troubled by this. His prayers ought to bring him nearer to God, but they do not. He grudges the time given them, and makes it as short as possible, and takes no trouble to pray well, so that his prayers are simply a burden to himself, and produce very little effect.

Tepidity, then, is a very dangerous form of spiritual torpor, and one into which men very easily fall. There is nothing about it which strikes the imagination, or greatly alarms the conscience, and it is, on this account, all the more dangerous. It is a danger to us all; however well we may begin, however fervent we may be at starting, we are liable to be overtaken by this drowsiness of spirit, if we are not constantly on our guard against it.

"And while men were asleep the enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way" (St. Matt. xiii. 25). The time of sleep is the time of danger. Then it is that the enemy comes and puts evil into our hearts, and destroys the good seed—then it is that "the devil cometh and taketh the word out of our hearts, lest, believing, we should be saved" (St. Luke viii. 12). During the time of spiritual torpor we

receive evil principles, and fall into evil habits, which, perhaps, are not perceived at once, but will certainly, in due time, produce their fruit. The Church, therefore, in the name of God, is constantly endeavouring to arouse us. The penitential seasons which occur during the year, the solemn feasts she celebrates, the times of indulgence which she grants, the Missions and Retreats which are so often preached, are so many methods for arousing us. The Church is constantly warning us, in the Apostle's words, that "it is the hour for us to rise from sleep," that "the night is past and the day is at hand," and that we are to "cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light," and she does so, in a special manner, at this holy season of Advent which we are now beginning.

Do not think, my dear brethren, that these words are addressed to others, and do not regard you. They are meant for us all, and there is no one so good that he can afford to neglect them. They are meant especially for those who are so unfortunate as to be actually in mortal sin; with all a mother's care the Church implores them to rise up from that deadly lethargy into which they have fallen. "The Lord is at hand." "Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall enlighten thee" (Eph. v. 14). But these words are not meant only for those who are in mortal sin, but for us all, because the influence of this world and the weakness of our human nature act powerfully upon us, and constantly lead us to forgetfulness of the things of God.

The day of final awakening will come soon enough for us all; the world will awake from its dreams when the Lord comes to judgment, and we must awake when the hour of death approaches; but then it will be too late. Now our Lord comes to arouse us, not by the terrors of His judgments, but by the loving inspirations of His grace. "Arise, thou that sleepest and Christ will enlighten thee."

SERMON III.

The Blessed Trinity.

"To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (I. Tim. i. 17).

ON this day, my dear brethren, we keep the Feast of the Adorable Trinity. We have gone through and celebrated, under the Church's guidance, all the mysteries of man's redemption. We meditated on the Incarnation, and the Nativity at Christmas, with all the tender and loving mysteries of the infancy and hidden life of our Lord; then, after a short interval, came Lent, to prepare us for the Passion and Resurrection of our Lord; and now we have seen the coming down of the Holy Spirit, and the establishment of the Church. When all this is done, the Church comes back once more to adore the deepest and most sublime of all mysteries—the nature of God Himself in His Unity and Trinity.

The world is full of mysteries; we may look whichever way we like and we find God's creation immeasurably beyond our understanding. In the visible nature, or the intellectual world, or moral world, it is all the same; whether we are astonished by the immensities that science displays to us, or bewildered by the seemingly infinite minuteness of the objects, or by their variety, or their number—in whichever way we turn, the more and the greater are the wonders which come before our eyes.

The marvels of creation ought to prepare us for the mysteries revealed to us in religion. If the common objects of everyday life are so marvellous, if we cannot really get to the bottom of the wonders contained in the least thing that we pick up by the roadside, we ought not to be surprised that we cannot comprehend the nature of the Infinite Being, by whom all things exist. Our reason should teach us that if God is so wonderful in all His creation, He will be infinitely more wonderful and incomprehensible in His own Divine Nature, and we can only say with the Apostle: "Oh, the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God!—how incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?' (Rom. xi. 33).

"Now, the Catholic faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons,

nor dividing the substance. For one is the person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one—the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. . . . . The Father is Almighty, the Son is Almighty, and the Holy Ghost is Almighty; and yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God ; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God" (Athanasian Creed).

This, my dear brethren, is the sublime and awful mystery which we are called on to worship on this day. It is the mystery of God's own Being, which none can comprehend but Himself; we cannot pretend to understand how it is, but we must believe and adore, because He has condescended to reveal it to us.

It is not in order to baffle and confound our imagination that these things have been revealed, but to touch our hearts. The great God would have us know Him as He is, as far as it is possible for our finite understandings, that we may have a tender devotion towards Him. The name of the Blessed Trinity was invoked upon us at our Baptism, and has been given to us as our watchword, and defence, and glory ; every day, as we sign ourselves with the cross, we renew this invocation, and almost every supplication which we make is made in the name of the three Persons of the Adorable Trinity: "But Thou, O Lord, art among us, and Thy name is called upon us; forsake us not" (Jer. xiv. 9).

The mystery of the Blessed Trinity is the very foundation of all our religion. It is the most ancient of all mysteries, and it alone is necessary. Creation need not have been, and redemption need not have been, but the Blessed Trinity necessarily exists from all eternity. Before the first created being was made, God, in three Divine Persons, had been, from all eternity, alone, independent, and wanting nothing. He needed not the adoration of angels and saints ; they could add nothing to His essential glory and happiness. All things, indeed, were made to praise and give glory to the Blessed Trinity, but not because the Almighty stood in need of any glory that creatures could give Him, since all that they had, and all that they could possibly give, was already His own ; "for of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things, to Him be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. xi. 36).

But the Blessed Trinity is the first of all mysteries, not only because it existed before all things were made, and was the cause of all, but also because all the other mysteries of the

Christian faith are dependent on the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity for their meaning and their very existence. We honour the divine condescension in the mystery of the Incarnation: it is because "the Word was made flesh," and the "Word was God." It is so great a mystery, because the Word was consubstantial to the Father—"God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made." Again, when we are devout to the Blessed Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, our devotion is founded on the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, and we know that He who was "sorrowful even unto death" in the garden of Gethsemane, and hung for three hours on the cross, was truly the Son of God, and that, in the midst of the ignominy of the cross, he "thought it not robbery to be equal to God," and "was heard for His reverence."

When we think of the Holy Spirit coming down upon the Apostles, and thank God for the wonders and blessings of the Day of Pentecost, it is because we know that this Holy Spirit is "the Lord and Life-giver, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who, together with the Father and the Son, is adored and glorified; who spoke by the prophets."

If you want to understand and value as you ought the mysteries of Redemption, you must begin, my dear brethren, by a deep sense of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and a devout and loving adoration for those Three Divine Persons who are united in one Godhead—"the Father of unmeasured majesty, Thy adorable true and only Son, and the Holy Ghost the Paraclete."

In all that is done on earth we have the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity working together for the sanctification of man. In the Mass we have the Sacrifice renewed, in which the Eternal Father accepts the oblation offered on our behalf by the only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, "who by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted unto God" (Heb. ix. 14); and so in all the other sacraments and prayers and ordinances of religion we have put before us, with more or less distinctness, the great mystery which is the foundation of them all.

The Church goes forth on her mission through the world in the name of the Blessed Trinity: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (St. Matt. xxviii. 19). Her commission runs in the name of the Blessed Trinity, and everything she does is done in this mighty name—her blessings, her prayers, her acts of authority, all go forth in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The mystery of Three Persons in one God is one which to

created minds is unfathomable; and, as the Apostle tells us, "the things also that are of God no man knoweth but the Spirit of God"—the Spirit "which searcheth the deep things of God" (I. Cor. ii., 10, 11). The mystery of the being of God is, perhaps, revealed to us that, when the faith presents to us many wonderful and mysterious things, we may not be startled. If in Himself He is unfathomable and incomprehensible, we need not be surprised if we find that His ways are wonderful and His judgments unsearchable. How can the mysteries of redemption and sanctification of man be otherwise than marvellous, since they all depend on so wonderful a mystery as that of the Blessed Trinity? When once we have adored the Eternal God, who exists of Himself from all eternity—who fills heaven and earth with His presence, and is infinite in all perfection—who is Three Persons and One God, can we find anything in His works or His dealings with His creature so wonderful as to be a difficulty to us? May we not say that all mysteries are swallowed up in this one great and most sublime truth?

But, as I said, the mystery is revealed to us not merely as a speculative truth, but as something to touch our hearts and affect our lives, and our Lord condescended to put the Blessed Trinity before us as an example, and to pray for us, that we may be united, after the pattern of the Three Persons in One God. "And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us" (St. John xvii. 20).

Here we have the most beautiful example of unity—of the corporate unity which is ever to be the distinguishing mark of the Catholic, that they shall be "one body and one spirit"—one as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one—and an example, also, to come to individuals of the unity and brotherly feeling which ought to unite Christians together. "Careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all" (Eph. iv. 3). Of ourselves, my dear brethren, we should not have dared to take for our pattern the ineffable unity of the divine nature; but, as our Lord has been pleased to put this before us for our example, let us always remember we are all united as children and servants of the Blessed Trinity, whose name has been invoked upon us all.

The Feast of the Blessed Trinity gives me a good starting-point for a discussion of the "Articles of the Creed." In the

Catechism you will find that most of the Christian doctrine is delivered in the shape of instructions on the twelve Articles of the Apostles' Creed; it is, therefore, very desirable to go over this ground, and discuss in detail the great doctrines of which the Catechism speaks.

The Catechism begins by saying that "the chief things which God has revealed are contained in the Apostles' Creed." I must, therefore, speak about "creeds," or symbols of faith; of how many creeds there are, and how they are alike, and in what they differ, and why they differ at all. A creed is a solemn form of words, drawn up by the authority of the Church, to express the Catholic belief in the plainest and most concise way possible. There are three creeds which are in use in the Catholic Church, which are the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Creed of Pope Pius IV. Besides these, there is the Creed of St. Athanasius about the Holy Trinity, but this, though adopted by the Church, and recited in the Divine Office, cannot, in the strictest sense, be called a creed, as it is not used exactly as a confession of faith.

The Apostles' Creed is from time immemorial. It is so called, because it comes down from apostolic times, and there is no record of when, or how, it was first written. It is the familiar creed which we all learned in childhood, and forms part of our daily prayer. Next comes the Nicene Creed, which is the confession of faith the Church publicly makes on solemn occasions. It is said in the Mass on every great feast, and on all the Sundays throughout the year, on the feasts of the Apostles and doctors, and on many other occasions.

This creed was first put forth as the expression of the Catholic faith by the Fathers of the First General Council—that of Nicea—and was completed by the Second General Council, at Constantinople, in 381. In these two Councils the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity was decided, and the errors contrary to it were condemned, so that the Nicene Creed is, specially, a confession of the Church's faith in the Blessed Trinity.

These creeds agree together, and yet differ, because one is the completion of the other; the faith declared by one is more clearly expressed by the other, and is put into words which defy misconstruction, or, at any rate, put an end to the misconstructions which were prevalent at the time. This is well illustrated in the words in which the Divinity of our Lord are confessed. The Apostles' Creed merely says: "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord." This was quite enough for more than three centuries, and martyrs died for the Divinity of our Lord,

and confessors gave up all the world could offer for His sake, without requiring any more exact declaration. But when the question had once been raised—as it was raised in the fourth century—as to what was the precise meaning of "His only Son, our Lord," it must be answered at once, and the answer came thus, in the words of the Nicene Creed: "And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages; God of God; Light of Light; true God of true God: begotten, not made; consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made."

Now, at least, there can be no mistaking the Church's doctrine; and the real meaning of the Apostles' Creed, if it was uncertain in itself, is put beyond all doubt. This is the way in which one creed differs from another—and each creed essentially and necessarily contains in itself the power of expansion—of being more fully set out and explained—in the profession which it makes of believing in the Catholic Church. What else does this profession mean, except to refer its teaching to the judgment and explanation of a living authority upon earth?

The other creed commonly used in the Church is the Creed of Pope Pius IV. This was drawn up after the Council of Trent in the sixteeth century, and contains the decision of the Church on all the matters which were disputed at the "Reformation." It begins by reciting the Nicene Creed, and goes on to speak of ecclesiastical tradition, the Sacraments, the Real Presence, the Mass, Purgatory, the devotion paid to saints, and the supremacy of the Pope. Towards the conclusion, this sentence has now been introduced: "Moreover, I undoubtingly receive and confess all the other things delivered, defined and declared by the Sacred Canons and Œcumenical Councils, and, in particular, by the most holy Council of Trent, and by the Œcumenical Council of the Vatican, especially about the primacy and infallible teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff." The profession of faith concludes with these solemn words: "I, ——, promise, vow, and swear this. So help me God, and His holy Gospel!"

The Creed of Pope Pius IV. is used on all solemn occasions —very often, for instance, when converts are received into the Church—and it is commonly used when the Bishops and clergy meet in provincial and diocesan synods, and by those who are appointed to ecclesiastical offices.

The Apostles' Creed is divided into twelve parts, or articles, and the Catechism, in explanation, treats first of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity and of the Divine Nature. It begins by speaking of the nature of God. "God is the Supreme Spirit,

who exists of Himself, and is infinite in all perfections." "Now this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent" (St. John xvii. 3). The very foundation of all religion is the knowledge of God—not a mere intellectual and speculative knowledge, but a deep sense of God's greatness and majesty. "I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be perfect" (Gen. xvii. 1). This was the one commandment that God gave to Abraham; the two things went together—walking before God and the practice of perfection. In proportion as we walk with God, and keep Him always before us, will our real sanctity and perfection be great, and all religion which is not founded on any real appreciation of the majesty and greatness of God, is a mere external thing, which has not any real strength.

To "know God," we must first have an idea of the greatness of God—that He is infinite and infinitely high above all His creatures. Let us dwell upon the words of St. Paul: "God who made the world and all things therein, He being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is He served with men's hands, as though He needeth anything, seeing it is He who giveth unto all life and breath and all things; and hath made of one all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, determining appointed times and the limits of their habitation, that they should seek God, if haply they may feel after Him or find Him, although He is not far from every one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts xvii. 24).

Almighty God has imprinted a knowledge of Himself on all mankind, and every man feels within himself a witness to God and to His greatness. The first idea by which we know God is that of Father. As St. Paul says, "The Spirit giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 16). He is the universal Father of all creation, "from whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named"—(Eph. iii. 15)—and He delights to be called Father. "Our Father, who art in heaven," thus it is that God would be known to His creatures. Let us always, then, think of Him as our Father, and have a real filial reverence for Him, and then we cannot be far wrong in our conception of Him. "Thee, the Father everlasting, all the earth doth worship. To Thee the angels, to Thee the heavens and all the powers, to Thee the cherubim and seraphim cry out without ceasing, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth: full are the heavens and the earth of the majesty of Thy glory."

The Lord God is the Father of all beings—of the mighty angels who surround His throne, and of the meanest of created

things ; they are all His children, and they are equally dependent upon His bounty. "Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature." "All expect of Thee that Thou give them food in season. What Thou givest them they shall gather up. When Thou openest Thy hand they shall all be filled with good. But if Thou turn away Thy face they shall be troubled. Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust (Ps. cxliv. 16 ; ciii. 27).

But, if all creation hangs upon the word of this Almighty Father, how much more lovingly and confidently should we approach Him, my dear brethren, since we are not only His creatures, but are, by Baptism, in a special way His adopted children, and the brethren of His only-begotten Son? "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear ; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). We know that God is our Father, and when we are in need, and no other can help us, then we call upon Him for aid ; but at other times how few there are who give Him the love and reverence of children ! "The son honoureth the father, and the servant his master ; if, then, I be a father, where is my honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. i. 6). May not Almighty God say this of Christians, as He had once of the Jewish people?

Almighty God is the life and the light of all creation ; "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Think, my brethren, of that teeming life that fills earth, air, and ocean ; of that seemingly infinite vitality with which creation is filled, and then think that it is the great God that made all things live, the little and the great—that it is from the unbounded life that is in Him that they are alive, and that they are, as it were, but drops from His infinite ocean of being. The more widely science opens to us the grandeurs of creation, and shows that every part of it is full of life and wonder, the greater must ever be our admiration and adoration of Him from whom all life comes,

"In Him was life, and life was the light of men, and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (St. John i. 4). This world is to our mind a place of darkness and confusion. Many things, indeed, men can see, but those things the soul wants to understand—the things that are to her peace—of herself she cannot see ; and the one source of light is that great God, who alone can give to His creatures the light they need ; "for with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 10).

By the instinct of our nature we know God as our Father,

and as the Life and Light of all who live, even without the more abundant knowledge of His bounty and love given to us by revelation ; and our great duty through life is to keep this knowledge before us. Contact with the world, with its business and its pleasures, the constant use which we have to make of creatures, has a tendency to efface the image of God from our souls, and it is only by thought and prayer that we can keep it fresh and clear in our hearts. Those who do so can easily "walk before God and be perfect;" those who allow the thought of God to grow dim within them are in the greatest danger of turning their backs upon Him, and of "worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever" (Rom. i. 25).

From this first idea of God in Himself comes the thought of what He is to us, and first that He is everywhere present. He it is who gives being, and life, and power to everything in creation, and in every part of creation His presence must be. "If Thou turn away Thy face, they shall be troubled, they shall fail, and shall return to their dust." Everywhere, and in everything, God must be ; His presence must be in all things from the most minute of created beings, to the furthest bounds of the universe that man can discover, and beyond that, through infinite space. "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven Thou art there ; if I descend into hell Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. And I said perhaps darkness shall cover me, and night shall be my light in my pleasures. But darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be light as the day : the darkness thereof and the light thereof are alike to Thee" (Ps. cxxxviii. 7).

This thought of the presence of God is an overwhelming thought, if only we dwell upon it. It is a thought which subdues and controls, whilst also it guides and encourages, the heart of man. How many sinners, my dear brethren, have been converted by simply dwelling on this universal presence of God—how many saints have been led on to perfection, and brought safely through every trial, by constantly remembering it ! Or, rather, may we not say that it is the one great thought that has made saints, and that those who dwell much upon it must almost necessarily lead holy lives.

But it is not merely that God is present, but the manner of His presence, which is so overwhelming ; He is present wholly and entirely in every point of creation. It is not as if His

presence could be divided, and He could be partly in one place and partly in another, but He is everywhere, with the whole infinite perfection and immensity of His Godhead. He is "not far from every one of us"—He is wholly and entirely in the body and soul of each one of us, as if nothing else existed, and, at the same time, He is present, with the same majesty,—He is wholly and entirely present, at the most distant point of the universe. Such is the idea of the presence of God which is borne in upon our souls—such His presence *must* be—there is no other way conceivable—and yet how wonderful! Who can understand this Infinite God, the very idea of whose presence is so utterly beyond the reason or the imagination of His creatures? What can we say, what can we do, in the presence of this incomprehensible and all-glorious Lord? "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and of His greatness there is no end. Generation and generation shall praise Thy works and they shall declare Thy power" (Ps. cxliv. 3).

On this Feast of the Blessed Trinity, then, my dear brethren, let us bow down and worship the infinite greatness of our God —let us thank Him for having deigned to reveal to men the hidden mystery of His Divine nature, that as, by this revelation, we, in some sort, share in the knowledge of the angels, we may join with them in the humble worship and adoration which they pay without ceasing to "the Father of incomprehensible majesty, the adorable, true, and only Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete," three Persons and one God, "to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

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SERMON IV.

The Divine Nature.

"As the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son also to have life in Himself" (St. John v. 26).

In these words, my dear brethren, our Lord seems to point out to us the essential character of Almighty God, which places at once an infinite distance between Him and all His creatures. He "has life in Himself," whereas the life of all created beings is but a life dependent upon Him and upheld by Him. He "exists of Himself, and is infinite in all perfections." It enters into the very idea and thought of God that He exists necessarily, and He cannot possibly be conceived, or thought of, as not existing. This world, and all that is in it, might have been or not have been, or thousands of other and different worlds might have been created instead of it. "They shall grow old as a garment, and as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the self-same, and Thy years shall not fail" (Heb. i. 11). There may be a new heaven and a new earth, but He who created heaven and earth cannot be conceived as not existing or as changed: He has "life in Himself."

This self-existence is expressed in the name by which the Almighty chose to be known to His people. "Moses said to God, Lo, I shall go to the children of Israel and say to them, The God of your fathers hath sent me to you. If they should say to me, What is His name? What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I am who am. He said, Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, He who is hath sent me to you" (Exod. iii. 13). So, again, when the Jews said to our Lord, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am" (St. John viii. 57).

Creatures are made, and become old and pass away; but through all eternity God is; by the necessity of His own Divine nature, He exists for ever in one unpassing, unchanging, and unchangeable Being, in which "there is no change nor shadow of alteration" (St. James i. 17).

In this essential Divine attribute of self-existence are contained all the wonders and perfections of the Godhead. Because He exists of Himself and has life in Himself He is

eternal and infinite in all perfections. He fills heaven and earth with His presence, and sees and knows all things, and can do all things. Every attraction and beauty that is to be found in any one of His creatures exists in an eminent and surpassing degree in Him; for the excellence of the creature is but a faint reflection of the infinite glory of the Creator. "He that planted the ear shall He not hear? or He that formed the eye, doth He not consider?" (Psalm xciii. 9). He that gave beauty and glory, and a thousand perfections and excellencies to His creatures, shall He not Himself be beautiful and glorious? Oh, my dear brethren, let us, with the saints, consider how many things, beautiful and admirable and worthy of love, are to be found in this creation, and rise from them to the thought of the infinite and surpassing loveliness of their Creator! "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I. Cor. ii. 9). What mind or heart, then, can conceive, even in the faintest degree, the glory of the Great Creator, who by His word has prepared such things? If His heaven is so great, what is He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain? If the New Jerusalem—the city where Christ reigns, with His saints—is so glorious, what must He be who fashioned it by His will? If the countless angels who surround His throne are so beautiful, what must that Lord be in the light of whose countenance they all live?

The mind of man cannot conceive the real glory of the Divine presence; but let us dwell on the pictures of His majesty given in the Holy Scripture. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated, and His train filled the temple. Upon it stood the seraphim; the one had six wings, and the other had six wings; with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And they cried one to another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of Hosts, all the earth is full of His glory. And the lintels of the door were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke" (Isaias vi. 1). Again, "I beheld till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days sat: His garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like clean wool: His throne like flames of fire: the wheels of it like a burning fire. A swift stream of fire issued forth from before Him; thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him" (Daniel vii. 9).

God is eternal: He is the "Ancient of Days." "God had no beginning: He always was, He is, and He always will be."

Incomprehensible to the poor understanding of man is this wonderful truth—that you may go back, in imagination, millions and millions of ages, and yet, after all, be no nearer to the commencement of God's eternity! The duration of existing things, as described by men of science, is bewildering to our imaginations; but if we put all these possible ages at their longest, still before them there is an eternity, during which God was existing of Himself and by Himself. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Apoc. i. 8).

How great is the contrast between the eternal duration of the Creator and the busy, hurried, passing life of man on earth! How different is our reckoning of time from His! "A thousand years in Thy sight are as yesterday, which is past, and as a watch in the night; as things that are counted nothing shall their years be. In the beginning man shall grow up like grass; in the morning he shall flourish and pass away: in the evening he shall fail, grow dry, and wither" (Ps. lxxxix. 4). Almighty God seems to us slow and long-suffering in His dealings, and men say, as the Apostle tells us they did in his time, "Where is His promise or His coming? For since the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II St. Peter, iii. 4). But "the Lord is patient, because He is eternal." The justice of God is often long delayed, so that sinners despise His patience, and forget that He is a "patient rewarder," because He is eternal, and that "He dealeth patiently for their sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance" (II. St. Peter iii. 9).

We may all, my dear brethren, with advantage, dwell frequently on this passage of Holy Scripture, which describes God's dealings with sinners. "Say not, how mighty am I? and who shall bring me under for my deeds? for God will surely take revenge. Say not, I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? for the Most High is a patient rewarder. Be not without fear for sin forgiven, and add not sin upon sin. And say not, The mercy of the Lord is great: He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins; for mercy and wrath quickly come from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee" (Ecclus. v. 3).

As God, by virtue of His own essence, is eternal—that is, fills every point of time—so does He fill every part of space. "Whither shall I flee from Thy face?" God is unbounded,

and knows no limit, and no place can be conceived where He is not.

"Nature cannot hold Thee,
Heaven is all too strait
For Thine endless glory
And Thy royal state.

Out beyond the shining
Of the farthest star
Thou Thyself art stretching,
Infinitely far."

These beautiful words of Father Faber's hymn picture to us, in some degree, the immensity of God. All His creation, inconceivably great as it appears to us, is as nothing to His immensity. "Behold, the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance: behold, the islands are as a little dust, and Libanus shall not be enough to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations are before Him, as if they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity. To whom, then, have you likened God? or what image will you make for him?" (Isaias xl. 15).

Men are tempted to bring down God, in their thoughts, to their own level, and to make Him like to themselves, and they would treat with Him as with one whom they can comprehend, and whose ways are like their ways—but "My thoughts are not your thoughts; nor your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts." (Isaias lv. 8). When we cannot understand the Providence of God our best remedy is to meditate on the immensity and infinity of God, not as men imagine Him to themselves, but as He has described Himself to us in Holy Scripture, and then we shall have no difficulty in understanding why we cannot comprehend Him as we do one another.

As God is boundless in duration and in immensity, so He is without limit in His perfections. "He is infinite in all perfections:" every attribute of God is without bound; He is infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, infinitely just, infinitely merciful: each one of His attributes, in turn, awes and astonishes us. If we take the terrors of His justice, and meditate upon His judgments, then we may well say, to use the words of Holy Scripture: "Fear seized upon me and trembling, and all my bones were affrighted; and when a spirit passed before me the hair of my flesh stood up" (Job iv. 14). "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." "A fire is kindled

in my wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell: and shall devour the earth with her increase, and shall burn the foundations of the mountains" (Deut. iv. 24; xxxii. 22).

Again, take the mercy and patience of God, and once more we meet with an infinity. We are bewildered by the wonders of mercy and love displayed in the Incarnation. This great Lord, who is so mighty and terrible, lays aside His dignity to become man: He who is so far off, and so infinitely distant from all His creatures, deigns to share our lot, and to hide Himself in His own creation. The Eternal Word, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but debased Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 6).

If we go to Bethlehem, and see our new-born Saviour, or go to the Holy House of Nazareth, and there contemplate the hidden life of our Lord, what wonders of the Divine condescension are opened to our eyes! Every step of the Passion displays to us inconceivable wonders of His patience and long-suffering. He allows Himself to be rejected and despised by His own people: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and to the Scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified" (St. Matt. xx. 18). How must the angels who adored around His throne in heaven have been amazed at the mystery of God's patience with man! The Lord of Glory scourged at the pillar, crowned with thorns, and hanging like a criminal on the cross! In His dealings with men the Almighty displayed a new infinity, which even the minds of archangels could never have conceived—the infinity of patience and love.

How can He who is so terrible in His justice be, at the same time, so infinitely tender and long-suffering? How can we understand or reconcile these attributes? We cannot—but must only bow down and adore, and acknowledge that God is wonderful in all His ways, and beyond all that we can conceive or understand, and once more say with the Apostle: "Oh, the depth of the riches, of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?" (Rom. xi. 33). "O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven, and Thy truth reacheth even to the clouds. Thy justice is as the mountains of God, Thy judgments are a great abyss" (Psalm xxxv. 7).

God is omnipotent: that is, there are no limits to His power. "The Lord is great, and our God is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, He hath done in heaven and in earth, in the sea and in all the deeps." "Our God is in heaven, He hath done all things whatsoever He would" (Psalm cxxxiv. 5; cxiii. 2). The Catechism says, "God is called Almighty because He can do all things: 'with God all things are possible.'" "He is called creator of heaven and earth, because He made heaven and earth, and all things, out of nothing by His Word." All the wonderful and beautiful things around us simply come from the hands of God and exist by His pleasure. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were and have been created" (Apoc. iv. 11). And, if these existing things were not great enough or good enough, God, by His Word, could create a new heaven and a new earth, each a thousand times more glorious than those that exist: and it is not with Him as with men, to whom work is toil and pain. The mighty works of God are done without the slightest break or change to the infinite rest and eternal repose which belongs to the nature of Him "with whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration." "Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and let all the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord. For He spoke, and they were made; He commanded, and they Here created" (Psalm cxlviii. 4).

We are astonished at the fulness and richness of creation: everywhere we look there is an over-abundance of life that seems to us to be wasted. Why is this earth filled with riches that no eye will ever see? Why is the heaven studded with an almost infinite number of stars for which we can see no object? This is the work of infinite power; this is but a drop from the storehouse of infinite riches. "How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is filled with Thy riches. So is this great sea, which stretcheth wide its arms: there are creeping things without number—creatures little and great; there the ships shall go. This sea-dragon which Thou hast formed to play therein. All expect of Thee that Thou give them food in season. What Thou givest to them they shall gather up: when Thou openest Thy hand, they shall all be filled with good. But if Thou turn away Thy face, they shall be troubled: Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust. Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Psalm ciii. 24).

Everything that exists is made for one primary object—to

give glory to its Creator and to display His greatness: "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. xvi. 4). "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands. Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge" (Psalm xviii. 2). If even inanimate creatures, in their way, praise God, much more is it the duty of those to whom He has given understanding. "O ye sons of men, bless the Lord: praise and exalt Him above all for ever. Ye servants of the Lord, bless the Lord: ye spirits and souls of the just, bless the Lord: praise and exalt Him above all for ever. . . . Give thanks to the Lord, because He is good: because His mercy endureth for ever" (Dan. iii. 82).

The work of the Lord shows infinite power, and at the same time infinite wisdom. Everywhere we see the most marvellous unity and harmony of design: in everything there is to be found the reign of law and order—the most perfect simplicity, combined with an almost infinite richness and variety of detail. "Thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number and weight" (Wisd. xi. 21). In all the works of creation man can follow and trace a mind like, in a sense, to his own, but infinitely greater—that Eternal Mind to whose image man was created.

It is good to dwell on the infinite wisdom of God. Men cannot fail to see that their strength is absolutely as nothing when compared to the power of God: no man ever, for a moment, dreamed that the power of God could be resisted. But men do not realize that the knowledge and wisdom of God are just as much beyond them as His power. Men are exalted by the understanding that God has given them, and think that nothing is beyond their reach, and even that they may enter into judgment with Almighty God Himself—but the knowledge and understanding of all men together, great as it undoubtedly is, is nothing in the sight of Infinite Wisdom. "Man cannot be justified compared with God: if he will contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one for a thousand" (Job ix. 2).

We now come, my dear brethren, to speak of what concerns us most—the rights which God has over us, and our constant responsibility to him. Men are too apt to think and speak as if Almighty God were as one of themselves—as if, if I may use such an expression, He were a kind of constitutional King, with whom they could make their own terms. He is, in reality, the absolute and supreme Lord over all His creatures, and they have no rights, but what He in His goodness gives them, and the only attitude which they can assume towards Him is that of humble and abject submission. "Cannot I do with you, as this

potter, O House of Israel, saith the Lord? Behold, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O House of Israel" (Jer. xviii. 6). In the prophet Isaias we find the same figure of speech: "This thought of yours is perverse: as if the clay should think against the potter, and the work should say to the maker thereof, Thou madest me not; or the thing framed should say to him that fashioned it, Thou understandest not." And, again: "Woe to him that gainsayeth his Maker, a shred of the earthen pots: shall the clay say to him that fashioned it: What art thou making?" (Isaias xxix. 16; xlv. 9).

We are all of us, in the hands of our Maker, like the clay, and our one right and duty is to do His will. "As the potter's clay is in his hand to fashion and order it, all his ways are according to his ordering, so man is in the hand of Him that made him, and He will render to him according to His judgment" (Ecclus. xxxiii. 13). Let us listen to the words of the Almighty Himself: "See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God beside me. I will kill and I will make to live: I will strike and I will heal, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. I will lift up my hand to heaven and I will say: I live for ever. If I shall whet my sword as the lightning, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and repay them that hate me" (Deut. xxxii. 39).

The duties which we owe to Almighty God necessarily come before all others; indeed, we owe nothing directly to any creature. Our duties and obligations to others come from the duty which we owe to our Creator, and are absolutely dependent upon it. If, then, we allow anything, however good or noble it may seem to be—whether duties to parents or kindred, to country or humanity generally—to interfere with the supreme duty which we owe to God, we are committing an injustice.

The Catechism tells us that "we must hate sin above all other evils, so as to be resolved never to commit a wilful sin, for the love or fear of anything whatsoever." God is so great, that anything which is an offence against Him is, of its own nature, an immensely greater evil than anything else that can happen; indeed, as He is infinitely great, sin is, in a sense, an infinite evil. You sometimes hear people foolishly speak of "small sins," as if any sin could be otherwise than a great evil. It is so great, that no possible consideration, either for yourself or for others, can make it right to commit a sin. If you could gain the whole world, or save the whole world, by one sin, it must not be done, and you would be without excuse if you did it, because it is an offence against your Creator.

We speak, indeed, of venial sins—and people sometimes imagine that *venial* means trifling, or of no importance—but nothing that is displeasing to Almighty God can possibly be trifling. It is true that God more easily pardons some sins—those particularly, which are rather from weakness than from malice—but we cannot tell how great the atonement which His justice may require for venial sin. It is a painful thing to hear Christians talk as if sins were sometimes necessary and unavoidable: when, for instance, you hear people say that they were *obliged* to tell a lie to avoid some evil consequence, or to save some friend. What is this but saying that you care more about some trifling inconvenience than you do about the friendship of God? "Be not without fear for sin forgiven, and add not sin to sin" (Ecclus. v. 5). The Holy Scripture is full of instances in which Almighty God has punished with terrible severity even things which to us would appear comparatively unimportant; so let us never think that any sin is trifling.

"God knows and sees all things, even our most secret thoughts" (Catechism). This is the great thought which will keep us from sin, and encourage us in the practice of virtue. "Your Father seeth in secret." Listen to our Lord's words: "When thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth: that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee; when thou shalt pray, enter thou into thy chamber, and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee" (St. Matt. vi. 3).

It is an awful thing to think that every idea and imagination of our whole lives, every motion and act of our wills, is plain and open in the sight of God. Not a foolish thought of youth, or an ambition of manhood, has escaped His all-seeing vision, and He sees not as we ourselves do, in a confused and imperfect manner, but with a perfect comprehension and unerring judgment. "Neither is there any creature invisible in His sight, but all things are naked and open to His eyes, to whom our speech is" (Heb. iv. 13).

Men are constantly deceiving themselves as to their own motives, and sometimes succeed in making evil look like good, or, at any rate, hide from their own eyes the imperfection of their works; but, in the sight of God, every thought, word, and deed is weighed in a just balance, and "every man's work is manifest." This thought ought to be a terror to the wicked, but it is the consolation of those who are trying to serve God. Everything we do is appreciated by Him—even "a cup of cold water" given for His sake; He knows the labour and pain that

even trifling things cost us, and will repay us, not according to the value of what we have done, but according to our motives in doing it. Let us, then, my dear brethren, keep alive in our hearts the sense of God's presence, and of our responsibility to Him, for on this all religion depends, and it is the sure way to avoid sin.

We will conclude by considering what is the great duty which, as creatures, we owe to our Almighty Creator. We owe Him an unlimited obedience; whatever it may be His will to ask, we must be ready to give, even if it involve the sacrifice of all we have. "The Lord hath need of it," that is sufficient for us. When Almighty God commanded Abraham to "go forth from his country, and from his kindred, and out of his father's house," and afterwards to "take his only-begotten son Isaac, whom he loved, and offer him for a holocaust," He only asked what was, in the strictest way, a right—a right which could not have been refused without an injustice and a crime. Obedience is the first of all duties, and any service which is not founded upon strict obedience is a mockery, and almost an insult. "Obedience is better than sacrifice; it is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel, and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey" (I. Kings xv. 22). These are words which we should have constantly before us.

SERMON V.

Expecting Christ.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord." (St. Mark i. 3.)

On this day, my dear brethren, the world is awaiting our Lord's coming. Everywhere we see marks of preparation, and everything announces that some one is expected. You go out into the streets, and you see elaborate preparations for joy and festivity; every house, however poor it may be, has something to show at this season; there is some decoration, some renewal of gladness, some expected meeting of old friends, and some preparation for good cheer and festivity—in short, everything speaks to us of our Lord's coming.

Everything now speaks to us of preparation for Christmas—the whole world is full of it; but, alas! too often it is Christmas without Christ. Would that a careful preparation for the Christmas season always meant a sincere love of the Lord whose birthday it is! There are many people who decorate their houses and think but little of providing a place in their hearts for the Infant Jesus; there are many who make Christmas a time of festivity, but think little of the "tidings of great joy" which the angels brought on this night; and there are many who make it a season of universal kindness and sympathy, but can find very little love for our Lord Himself.

Let it not be so with us. We may enter heartily into all the pleasant and social feelings of those around us, and join in all the schemes of charity and festivity which are so common at this season; but let us not forget that it is our Lord's birthday, and that our first work is to prepare to welcome Him, and have a place for Him in our hearts. Without the real, tender, religious feeling for our Lord Himself, Christmas is but a very cold and heartless festivity, in spite of all its external gaiety.

Let us, then, take example from this world around us, and make a hearty preparation for Christmas. The world is going to celebrate Christmas in its own fashion, and spares no pains to do it well; and we must prepare, with the same zeal, to keep Christmas, as Christians should, by loyally preparing a place for the Lord of glory, who is to come amongst us.

Quis est iste Rex gloriæ?—Who is this King of glory? What is the preparation that should be made for His coming? He is the "desire of the eternal hills" (Gen. xlix. 26), for whom

the earth longed during so many ages. "Abraham, your father, rejoiced that he might see my day; he saw it, and was glad" (St. John viii. 56). "Many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them" (St. Matt. xiii. 17).

The Lord, whose birthday we are to celebrate, was the "Desired of all nations"—(Aggeus ii. 8)—and the world's history was one long preparation for His coming. The Jews had their part in preparing the way before Him; their whole history was, indeed, nothing else but a preparation, and every part of it was, in some shape or other, a figure of what was to come. "Now, all these things happened to them in figure, and they are written for our correction, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I. Cor. x. 11). The solemn sacrifices offered, and all the details of God's worship, were an anticipation of our Lord's sacrifice on the cross—were intended to keep alive the expectation of a Redeemer to come, and derived their efficacy from what that Redeemer was to do.

But it was not only the chosen people of God who had to prepare the way before Him; all nations must join, and the very wanderings and miseries of men became part of the preparation for their Redeemer's comiug.

Almighty God left men to themselves that they might underderstand the need they had of a Saviour, and sin multiplied, and the wail of misery went up to heaven, generation after generation, until the Lord's day had come: "They are corrupt, and are become abominable in their ways: there is none that doth good—no, not one. The Lord hath looked down upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God. They are all gone aside and become unprofitable together . . . . destruction and unhappiness in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known" (Ps. xiii. 1). Such is the picture the Holy Scripture gives of the human race during long ages: man striving to be sufficient for himself, and to be a last end for himself: running after worldly riches and worldly wisdom, and trying, in vain, to content himself with them, whilst every day the burden became heavier and more hopeless.

All this was necessary, that men might learn the need of a Saviour, and might at last look up to their Creator: "I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains from whence help shall come to me. My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. cxx. 1). The wanderings and miseries of men were made the means by which they were taught to look up to

heaven, "from whence we look for the Saviour our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory, according to the operation whereby also He is able to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philip. iii. 20).

But the world had also been prepared in another way for our Lord's coming. The great Roman empire had arisen, and, by degrees, broken down all the kingdoms of the earth, and united them into one great dominion. It was the great empire of iron, foretold by the Prophet Daniel, which was to crush and destroy all the kingdoms that had gone before it: "And the fourth kingdom shall be as iron. As iron breaketh into pieces and subdueth all things, so shall that break and destroy all these" (Dan. ii. 40). In this way the ground was to be cleared, that the word of God might go forth, without hindrance, to the ends of the earth, and the kingdom which God Himself was to establish might be founded in peace.

The opening words of this day's Gospel seem like a solemn announcement that the preparations of God's Providence have been completed: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being Governor of Judea, ... the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zachary, in the desert." The Roman empire was established in peace, and the sceptre had departed out of the hands of Juda, and now the Precursor of the Messiah was to go forth to prepare the way before Him.

But what was the immediate preparation for the coming of the Son of God upon earth? He prepared for Himself a home in the Immaculate Heart of His Blessed Mother, and He prepared the poor shelter of the stable of Bethlehem, in which He might be born. On the inward house of Mary, in which Jesus was to dwell for nine months, God had lavished all the riches of His grace. He had preserved her immaculate, even in the first moment of her conception. He had kept her, by a special grace, from the smallest stain of actual sin, and had poured into her soul an abundance of every grace which a creature could possess.

And now all is accomplished: the nine months have come to an end, and Mary has been brought by a special Providence to Bethlehem, that prophecy might be fulfilled: "And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least amongst the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth the Captain that shall rule my people Israel." Even as we speak, Mary and Joseph are finishing their long and wearisome journey, going from door to door to find shelter, and are at last driven to complete their loving preparations for our Lord's birth in the poor stable at Bethlehem.

And now, my dear brethren, it is not without an object that we dwell on all these preparations—the remote preparation by which God's Providence made the world ready for the coming of His Son, and the immediate preparation by which the Lord chose for Himself a home amongst men. The special work we ought to have before us, during the time of Advent, is to make a place for our Lord in our hearts. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the Sons of God" (St. John i. 11).

He came to His own people—to that nation which God had selected out of all men to be His kinsfolk according to the flesh—and the great mass of them rejected Him. He came to them, but their hearts were not prepared to receive Him, and all the graces He brought with Him would not avail without the necessary preparation on their part.

As it was with our Lord when He came Himself on that first Christmas night, so it is with the graces which He continues to send down upon men. His coming upon earth was the symbol of divine grace, and the cause of it. All graces are given to men through Him: "Of His fulness we all have received." All the spiritual favours given to the saints of the Old Law, by which they were made the friends of God, were bestowed on account of the Saviour who was to come; when He Himself came on earth the gates of heaven were opened, as it were, and a flood of graces was poured forth upon the earth. At all times grace is freely given to men for His sake. "Of His fulness we all have received": it falls like the rain upon the earth, upon the good and upon the bad, upon the just and upon the sinners. Every man receives some grace, more or less, according to his needs: sinners, that they may begin to turn to God; the just, that they may produce fruit in greater abundance. Our Lord is the true Light that "enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world," and every one receives some portion of His light.

We come, then, to the question: How is it that the grace of God produces so little fruit?—how many there are who appear to be altogether hardened, and show no signs at all of having received grace?—how many there are who appear to have received the grace of God in vain? It is not the fault of God's grace—that we know very well, "for the Word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints and of the marrow, and it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). We cannot say too much of the power of grace: it is, indeed, the Spirit of God

acting within us: "My grace is sufficient for you"—there is nothing which grace cannot accomplish—no matter how weak we may be in ourselves, no matter what may be the nature of the difficulties to be overcome, we can "do all things in Him that strengtheneth us."

The history of the Christian Church is one long account of the power of God's grace. It was poured out on the Apostles, and straightway they were able to fight against the whole world, to resist its power, and overcome its prejudices, and trample upon all its allurements. Grace was poured out again, in special abundance, upon the martyrs in times of persecution, and at once it was seen that the "foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

We read of the multitudes of simple people, of women and children, who were strong enough and brave enough to overcome all the force that the world could bring to bear upon them—what is this but the power of God's grace brought before our eyes! "There are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and the things that are not, that He may bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His sight" (I Cor. i. 26).

The power of God's grace is shown, not only in contest with external enemies, but in the wonderful fruits of holiness and excellence which it has produced amongst the saints. How varied and how beautiful were the virtues they displayed! Purity, humility, self-denial, heroism of all kinds, impossible to human nature of its own strength; What are all these things but the triumphs of God's grace! They are the fruit which the fertilizing power of grace has produced from the barren soil of our human nature. "There are diversities of operations, but the same God who worketh all in all" (1 Cor. xii. 6).

The grace of God, then, which is poured out so abundantly upon men, is in itself most fruitful and efficacious. Why, then, does it produce so little fruit amongst the generality of men? Why do we feel so little of its effects in ourselves? It is simply from the want of due preparation of heart. God's grace comes upon us as upon all men, but, if we are not prepared to receive it, it can produce no fruit, because it is not the will of God to act upon us without our own co-operation. It is like the rain from heaven beating upon the hard, sterile rock—the fertilizing showers may fall in abundance, but no blade of grass will spring up in return, and the rock will be as barren and unprofitable as ever.

It is therefore a matter of the greatest moment to us to consider what is the preparation that God asks of us in order that His grace may act freely in our hearts and produce worthy fruits. We may be sure that what God does in us will be in proportion to our readiness to correspond with grace. "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor: thy ear hath heard the preparation of their hearts" (Ps. ix. 38). God "hears the preparation of our hearts," and gives grace accordingly. Why is it that so little will convert some people, whilst every exertion is thrown away upon others? We read numberless instances, for example, of people being converted to the faith by a few words, whereas argument and exhortation are quite thrown away upon many. The reason generally is that some people are in such dispositions as to be prepared to receive God's grace, and welcome it when it comes; whereas others are not prepared for grace, and reject it.

St. Anthony, the great patriarch of monks, when he was a young man of large property, once went into the church and heard them read out our Lord's words: "Go, sell what thou hast and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," and he considered these words addressed to himself, and sold all his property, keeping only just enough to live upon; but afterwards he again heard the Gospel read, and the words "be not solicitous for to-morrow," struck him, and at once he gave up all that he possessed. So it was with St. Francis. He heard the words, "Do not carry gold or silver, or two coats, or a staff," and immediately he gave away his money, and put off his shoes, to follow our Lord's words literally and exactly.

These examples show us the state of preparation of heart in which these saints lived. How great must have been their anxiety to receive God's grace and to fulfil His commands! Millions of people have heard these same words, time after time, and have done nothing; but hearing them once was sufficient for the saints. It is not, of course, as if all were called, as these saints were, to the literal fulfilment of our Lord's words; but still the examples show the way in which our minds ought to be prepared to listen when God speaks by His grace.

Are we habitually ready to receive the grace of God?—are we willing that it should produce its full effect in our hearts? Are we the fruitful or the barren ground?—are we the rock which nothing can fertilize?—or the dry sand which drinks in the rain, and has very little to show for it? These, my dear brethren, are very important questions, because we shall some day have to give an account of all the graces we have received, and this is the time for considering them, since we are preparing

almost immediately to welcome our Lord, and we cannot receive Him without receiving the graces He brings with Him.

What is the preparation for the grace of God which our souls need?—how must we "prepare the way of the Lord"? The first preparation for grace is to feel the want of it. The world was not ready for the coming of its Saviour till it had learned its own misery, and the need it had of Him; and in the same way a Christian soul is not prepared to receive God's grace until it has come to feel the great need of it. The reason why people so often receive but scanty graces is because they do not feel any such want; they are like the man St. John describes as thinking himself "rich and made wealthy, and needing nothing." If you take a number of ordinary people at their prayers, how many of them, do you think, have a real earnest feeling of the necessity they have for God's grace? I am afraid that there are very few of us who feel this necessity as we ought to do. "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away" (St. Luke i. 53). The great preparation of soul for God's grace is a great hunger for it, and it is just this which is wanting in most of us.

And why do we not hunger after God's grace? We know how valuable a thing it is, and yet we do not much care about it. The reason is this. Grace is intended to enable us to do something, and we are not prepared to do it. How can we be in earnest in welcoming into our breasts the great motive energy of God's grace, if we do not mean to stir? God gives us grace for a special purpose. He gives it, for instance, to enable us to carry out His will in some matter in which we will not yield; there is something we ought to do, and we will not do it—there is some step which you feel you ought to take, and you cannot bring yourself to attempt it; then it is plain that you are not prepared for the grace which God would give you for this very purpose.

Again, grace is given you to enable you to fight against sin—to resist, if necessary, even "unto blood, striving against sin"—but, if you have agreed to make a truce with sin, and to let evil habits alone, how can you be prepared to receive grace? What is the use of arms to a soldier who doesn't mean to fight? And why should God arm you with His grace if you do not intend to use it?

The grace of God has always one ultimate object, and that is to make us love God better than we do; and, therefore, if we do not care about loving God any better, why should God give us His grace? Oh, my dear brethren, can we say honestly that we do desire to love God more than we do at present? Can we

truly say that we should consider it a very great favour to be able to love God even one degree more than we have hitherto done? Can we say this from our hearts? If not, we can easily see what preparation for grace is wanting to us. In the Apocalypse our Lord says to the tepid man: "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold fire-tried, that thou mayst be made rich, and mayest be clothed with white garments" (Apoc. iii. 18). Our Lord does not offer to give this most pure gold for nothing, but tells him to buy it; and what do you think is the price He will ask? We must buy the fine gold of God's love by ardently longing for it, and we must buy the white garments by the great desire which we have to be clothed in them. Can we offer this price? If we can, the grace of God will be given to us in abundance.

The preparation for receiving God's grace, then, is a real desire of it, and an honest intention of using it. These two things go together. It is idle to say that we desire the grace of God, if all that we mean is that we should like to be made very good and great friends of God, without taking any trouble ourselves. Such a feeling is *not* a wish for grace, since the very idea of actual grace is that it is something to help us in exertion and trouble.

We have now to come to one of the great seasons of grace. We are to celebrate our Lord's birthday, and to go once more in spirit to the stable at Bethlehem to renew all the tender thoughts and affections of the first Christmas night. The Church reads to us the Apostle's words, that "in these days God hath spoken to us by His Son," as if to remind us that our Lord in His Nativity has something to say to each of us—some word of warning, some word of encouragement, perhaps, meant specially for ourselves. It is certain that He will speak to us by His grace, if only we will prepare our hearts to listen to His voice.

Our work, then, to-day, my dear brethren, is to remove the obstacles which prevent grace from working effectually in our hearts. St. John cries out: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord: every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain." What are these mountains and hills that must be brought low? If we look into ourselves, and try fairly to find out what it is that hinders the grace of God in us, we shall generally find some positive fault which opposes itself like a mountain to the influence of grace. With some it is a deep-seated pride of heart. Men exalt themselves against God by all kinds of pride; in some it is the pride of intellect and the pride

of strength; in others the pride of wealth and worldly position—all those things which St. John calls "the pride of life."

This is one of the great obstacles to God's grace: if we will not endeavour to bring down this mountain of pride, and to humble ourselves, there is no room for the grace of God in our hearts. Our Lord seems to say to us, as He once did to Zaccheus: "Make haste and *come down*, for this day I must abide in thy house." We have to find out for ourselves what is the particular kind of pride which has most hold over us: Is it pride in our own independence? or pride in the opinion of others? Whatever it is, we must try to come down from our pride, so that our Lord may come and dwell with us by His grace. But again, other mountains are to be found in our passions—the spirit of hatred and revenge, of rancour and bitterness against our neighbours, is a mountain which the grace of God will not pass. Luxury and self-indulgence, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes," are mountains which stand in the way of grace. If we are not willing to remove these mountains, we shut the door against our Lord. The grace of God will, indeed, help us to remove them, but it will do nothing unless we ourselves are willing.

But there are not only mountains to be brought low: there are also valleys to be filled up: these are the negative faults of which we are guilty, the omissions of duty, and deficiences under which we labour. These, perhaps, hinder the grace of God quite as much as positive faults. If we are guilty of any great positive sins, we cannot easily fail to be aware of them—they speak at once to the conscience; but there are many who spend their lives with very little idea of the sins of omission of which they are guilty. They know very well that the grace of God does very little in their souls, and that their spiritual life is very languid and very barren, but they never trouble themselves to ask what is the reason.

Perhaps it is that they are doing so very little for God. They are giving, it may be, the smallest possible time to prayer—a few minutes every day, and half an hour or so on Sundays—and, perhaps, that is all. How can they expect God's grace to do much for them if they do so little to correspond with it? They give no room or opportunity for the voice of God to speak in their hearts, and then they are surprised that they do not hear it. Or it may be that the deficiency is a total want of all fervour and generosity: they want to give as little as possible of their hearts to Almighty God, and then wonder that God does not give much to them. There is not one of us who might not find some such deficiencies in his conduct which are enough to

account for the little fruit grace produces in his heart—little, at least, in proportion to what it might do. If we were to set ourselves to find out these deficiences, and to remedy them—to fill up, that is, the valleys which hinder the spirit from working in us—we should soon learn how great was the efficacy and fruitfulness of God's grace.

And what about the "crooked ways to be made straight"? This is, indeed, a large subject. How many people there are who are dishonest with Almighty God! They are perpetually saying one thing and meaning another; they are constantly making excuses in sin, and putting forward pretences which they know, or might easily know, are merely attempts to calm their own consciences. Is it not, indeed, true that we often make pretences to God, which we should not venture to make to men? —and are not these the crooked ways to be made straight?

Let us, then, prepare the way of the Lord: let each one look into his own heart and see what it is that most stands in the way of grace, and then set himself in earnest to remove it. And this, my dear brethren, is the very time when our Lord is looking for a home on earth. His Blessed Mother is going from door to door, seeking in vain for a shelter for her Divine Son, and this in the very city of David. Let us, in this day at least, try to prepare a home for Him in our hearts, and to make them, poor as they are, a worthy place in which He may dwell.

SERMON VI.

The Incarnation.

"Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that dissolveth Jesus, is not of God, and this is Antichrist" (I. St. John iv. 2).

THE sign of the cross, my dear brethren, is one of the distinguishing marks of the Catholic faith. Catholics use this holy sign on all occasions; they have it repeated, again and again, in their churches and in their houses: they have it everywhere, in images and in pictures, and on all occasions they sign it on themselves. Nothing can give a worse idea of the faith and practice of a Catholic than to find him ashamed of the sign of the cross. If, for example, you never see the figure of the cross in his house, and he is afraid to bless himself with the sign of the cross if strangers are present, you may be quite sure that his religion is not quite what it should be.

The sign of the cross is the symbol and token of our Lord's Incarnation—it is the "sign of the Son of Man," by which we constantly remind ourselves that the great God became man, and, as man, deigned to suffer for us. We keep the image of Jesus crucified about us and in our houses, and we sign ourselves with the sign of His cross as a token that we place all our hopes in His Incarnation and Passion. Every time we make the sign of the cross we are making a hasty, but real, profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, God and man—in His Incarnation and His Passion.

When taken with the words which are commonly pronounced at the same time the sign of the cross also puts us in mind of the Blessed Trinity. "We make the sign of the cross," the Catechism tells us, "*first* to put us in mind of the Blessed Trinity, and, *secondly*, to remind us that God the Son died upon the cross for us." By this simple sign, then, we are constantly calling to mind the two great mysteries which are the foundation of the Christian faith, and not only reminding ourselves, but also making a public profession of them.

When we make the sign of the cross we must remember that we are using that symbol which, from the beginning, the Catholic Church has adopted as the sign of the Son of Man. It was the sign in which the martyrs of the early Church went forth to victory—it was the sign by which the early Christians

fortified themselves against all the temptations of the pagan world that surrounded them; it is a precious legacy of faith and devotion, left us by our forefathers in the faith ever since the earliest ages.

Tertullian, the earliest father of the Latin Church, thus describes the custom of the Christians in his time: "In all our travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, in putting on our clothes and shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our lamps, in lying down, in sitting down, whatever employment occupies us, we mark our forehead with the sign of the cross." This father, who writes two hundred years after Christ, speaks of the custom of making the sign of the cross, not as of a new thing, but as of a well-established usage of the Church. To pass over two centuries, we find St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in the fourth century, saying: "Let us not therefore be ashamed of the cross of Christ; but, even though another hide it, do thou openly seal it on thy brow, that the devils, beholding that royal sign, may flee far away, trembling. But thou make this sign when thou eatest and drinkest, sittest or liest down, risest up, speakest, walkest—in a word, on every occasion; for He who was here crucified is above in the heavens. . . . . Let none be weary; take up arms against the adversaries in the cause of the cross itself; set up the faith of the cross as a trophy against the gainsayers. For when thou art about to dispute with unbelievers concerning the cross of Christ, first make with the right hand the sign of the cross of Christ, and the gainsayer will be dumb. Be not ashamed to confess the cross. . . . . Let us not, then, be ashamed to confess the Crucified. Let the cross become our seal, made with boldness by our fingers upon the forehead, on everything—on the bread we eat and the cup we drink, in our comings in and our goings out, before we sleep, when we lie down, and when we awake, when we are walking, and when we are still. Great is that preservative; it is gratuitous for the poor's sake; without toil, for the sake of the weak, since also its grace is from God; it is the sign of the faithful, and the dread of the devils. 'For He has triumphed over them in it, having exposed them confidently in open show' (Colos. ii. 15). For when they see the cross, they are reminded of the Crucified; they are afraid of Him who has bruised the heads of the dragon. Do not despise the seal because it is a free gift, but for this, the rather, honour the benefactor" (*Faith of Catholics, Vol. III. pp. 430, 433*).

I have given this long extract, my dear brethren, that the example of our Christian forefathers may encourage us boldly to use this holy sign, on all occasions, and to use it in such a

manner that it may really be an act of faith and devotion to our Lord Incarnate.

I want, in this sermon, to speak of the mystery of the Incarnation—the mystery of mysteries—on which the Christian faith is founded. This great mystery rests, as we have said, on the great primeval mystery of the Blessed Trinity. As that is the great mystery of God in Himself, so is the Incarnation the great mystery of God in His dealings with His creatures. He became Incarnate, and took upon Himself a finite nature, that He might, in a certain sense, come down from His infinity, and condescend to the littleness of created beings. He placed Himself, as far as was possible, on the level of His own creation, that His creatures might be brought near to Him, and so might better understand Him and love Him.

"By the Incarnation, I mean that God the Son took to Himself the nature of man. The Word was made flesh" (Catechism). The first thing to consider is the Divinity of our Lord. The Catechism gives us the Catholic faith in these words: "Is Jesus Christ truly God? Yes; Jesus Christ is truly God. Why is Jesus Christ truly God? Jesus Christ is truly God, because He has one and the same nature with God the Father. Was Jesus Christ always God? Yes: Jesus Christ was always God, born of the Father from all eternity. Which Person of the Blessed Trinity is Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity."

The reality and truth of our Lord's Divinity was the first great question to be defined in the early Church. The distance between the greatest of all conceivable creatures and the Almighty Creator is so vast, that, if He was not God in the truest sense—God equal to the Father—the whole mystery of the Incarnation would be as nothing in comparison. He would then be only a creature; and, when compared with the Creator, would be but on a level with ourselves. Nothing could be done till this great truth was placed beyond doubt. The Church, therefore, decided the question in those unmistakable words of the Nicene Creed, which I have already quoted several times: "And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, and born of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made; consubstantial to the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." He was of the same Divine nature with God the Father, and "consubstantial to Him." He was the true God and the true Light, "begotten, not made;" He was God from all eternity, "by whom all things were made."

Let us look into the Holy Scriptures, my dear brethren, and see how this great truth is put before us in the words of Inspiration. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men, and the Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it . . . . that was the true Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not . . . . and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we saw His glory, the glory, as it were, of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (St. John i. 1).

Listen, again, to St. Paul's solemn words: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but debased Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man" (Phil. ii. 6).

But what are our Lord's own words? "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son also to have life in Himself" (St. John v. 26). "Abraham, your father, rejoiced that he might see my day; he saw it, and was glad. The Jews, therefore, said to Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am" (St. John viii. 56). In these words our Lord declares Himself to be that eternal Lord who is from all eternity, and in Himself has life. Again He says: "I and the Father are one;" and, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you, I speak not of Myself, but the Father who abideth in Me, He doth the works. Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" (St. John xiv. 10).

In these words directly, and, implicitly, in almost every word and action of His life on earth, our Lord declares His Divinity, and He asks us to confess Him for our God, as St. Peter did when he said: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God."

But it is not enough to confess our Lord to be God; we must acknowledge Him also as man. He seems, in a special manner, to delight to be called the "Son of Man." The wise men offered gold, frankincense and myrrh to our Lord in the stable at Bethlehem, and this myrrh was the symbol of mortality. St. Gregory says: "There are some who confess Him to be God and King, but deny that He assumed human flesh. These,

indeed, offer Him gold and frankincense, but refuse Him the myrrh of His assumed mortality."

The Catechism, therefore, explains very carefully the reality of His human nature. "Jesus Christ is truly man. Why is He truly man? Jesus Christ is truly man, because He has the nature of man, having a body and soul like ours. Was He always man? No; Jesus Christ was not always man. He has been man only from the time of His Incarnation."

When we say that Christ is man, we mean that He has a complete and perfect human nature, identical with our own nature, having a body and soul like ours, and resembling us in all things except sin. "For we have not a high priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin" (Heb. iv. 15).

The Athanasian Creed explains this to us beautifully in these words: "Now, this is the right faith, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God is both God and man. He is God of the substance of His Father, begotten before all ages; and He is man of the substance of His Mother, born in time; perfect God and perfect man; subsisting of rational soul and human flesh. Equal to the Father, according to His Godhead; and less than the Father, according to His manhood. Who, although He be both God and man, yet He is not two, but one, Christ. One, not by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by the taking of the manhood into God. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person. For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ."

The Catechism says: "There are two natures in Jesus Christ, the nature of God and the nature of man. Are there also two Persons in Jesus Christ? No; in Jesus Christ there is only one Person, which is the Person of God the Son." It may appear, at first sight, that it is not of any great importance to dwell so much on the Persons and Natures of our Lord, but, in reality, the whole doctrine of the Incarnation turns on these points. Those who teach erroneous doctrine as to the Person or the two natures of Christ are, in fact, as the apostle says, "dissolving Christ," and making void the whole mystery of the Incarnation.

When the great attempt of the Arian heresy to deny the Divinity of our Lord was defeated by the Church's decision that He was "consubstantial to the Father," another error was introduced, which did not, indeed, deny the Divinity of our Lord, but said that there were in Him two persons—a Divine Person and a human Person; that the human Person came

upon earth and walked with man—that it was the human Person which was nailed to the cross, and, consequently, that Mary was not the Mother of God, but only the Mother of the human Person. This, in reality, came to very much the same as saying that our Lord was not God, and so it was felt by the instinct of the faithful.

A General Council was called at Ephesus to consider the new teaching, and the Fathers, as the most conclusive way of deciding the question practically, pronounced that Mary was, and was to be called, the "Mother of God." But the feeling of the people would hardly wait for the formal decision of the Council. The inhabitants of Ephesus besieged the church doors the whole day in anxious expectation, and when the decision was publicly announced the multitude broke into enthusiastic transports of joy, and "Mary, Mother of God," was in every mouth, and the whole city was illuminated.

The next attack on the doctrine of the Incarnation was made by the Eutychian heresy, not long after the Nestorians had been condemned. In our Lord, the Eutychians taught, there was only one Person, and this Divine Person had only one nature. From this doctrine it followed that all that our Lord had seemed to do for us on earth was a delusion. He was God only, and, therefore, He could neither suffer nor die. He had not really come down to the level of His creatures, by sharing the nature of man, and His actions on earth were not real human actions. This doctrine was repeated in different forms, all, directly or indirectly, denying the human nature, and became one of the deadliest heresies which ever waged war against the Church.

These questions, then, of the Person and natures of our Lord are not mere scholastic questions, but the great practical doctrines on which Christianity turns. In the Divine Person of Jesus Christ, the Lord God came down on earth to raise us to heaven: is He truly the "Child born to us, the Son given to us," whom we are to acknowledge and love as our brother? This is the great truth these heresies attacked.

About these errors St. Augustine speaks in these strong terms: "Therefore are utterly to be loathed those pestiferous teachings of Eastern falsehood, those brand-new inventions of ungodliness, which dare to assert that He who in one Person is both Son of God and Son of Man, hath but one nature. On the one hand, if a man say that Christ is not partaker of the Divine Nature, He hath denied the glory of his Maker; on the other, he who saith that the Manhood is not of the nature of man, hath denied the mercy of his Saviour. As touching these

points, it is well-nigh impossible for an Arian to believe that the Gospel writers are any better than liars, since they distinctly assert, in some places, that the Son of God is equal, and, in others, that He is inferior to the Father. Farther, if a man be given over to this soul-slaying delusion of believing that our Saviour hath only one nature, he must, of necessity, admit either that it was only God, or that it was only man who was crucified. But it was not so. If He had been of no nature but the Divine, He could not have suffered; and if He had been of no nature but the human, He could not have conquered death" *(Breviary Lesson).*

The Eutychian heresy was condemned at the fourth General Council in 451. The Pope, St. Leo the Great, assembled 500 of the Eastern Bishops at Chalcedon, a town in Asia, close to Constantinople, and presided over them by his legate. The Pope's letter defining the faith was read, and the Fathers of the Council cried out, "Peter hath spoken by the mouth of Leo," and then made a decree almost in the terms of the Athanasian Creed, which I have already given. "We unanimously declare," they said, "that all must confess one and the same Jesus Christ our Lord: perfect in Divinity and perfect in humanity, true God and true man: possessing a reasonable soul and a body: consubstantial with the Father in Divinity, and consubstantial with us in humanity; like to us in everything save sin; begotten of the Father before all ages, as to His Divinity: in these last times born of the Virgin Mary, as to His humanity, for us and for our salvation: one and the same Jesus Christ, only Son, Lord, in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation: in whom this union hinders not the difference of natures: on the contrary, preserved to each what is its own, they meet in one single person, in one hypostasis: so that Jesus Christ is not divided into two Persons, but is one and the same Lord, the Word, the only Son of God."

The life of our Lord on earth is continually putting before us His two natures. He exhibits the power of God, and, at the same time, the weakness and suffering of man. The angels sing songs of gladness at His birth, and pay their homage as to their new-born King, and the star guides His subjects from the East to adore Him; but then come the Circumcision and the flight into Egypt, in which He pleases to display the weakness of His human nature. We see our Lord walking on the Sea of Galilee, and stilling its tempests by His word; or we see Him standing at the tomb of Lazarus. The power of God is before us, and we listen to the words of God, "Lazarus, come forth!" "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, although he

be dead, shall live; and every one that liveth and believeth in Me, shall not die for ever" (St. John xi. 25). Or, again, if we place ourselves with Peter, James, and John on Mount Thabor, when "He was transfigured before them. And His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with Him . . . . and as He was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo! a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him. And the disciples, hearing, fell upon their face, and were much afraid" (St. Matt. xvii 2). In this glorious scene, my dear brethren, do we not seem to see the beauty and majesty of the Godhead shining through the veil of His human nature?

But Mount Thabor is near to the Garden of Gethsemane, and the glory of the Transfiguration is not far from the ignominy of the cross. "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." In His Divine nature the Lord could know no sorrow; not one breath of pain or disturbance could ever ruffle the eternal tranquillity of the Infinite God. It is the human soul of Christ that suffers. About this St. Ambrose says: "'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' So, also, elsewhere He saith, 'Now is My soul troubled.' It was not He who hath taken the manhood into God who was troubled, but the manhood which He had so taken. The soul of man is able to be moved by divers feelings, but not so God. 'The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.' That which was exceeding sorrowful was not Himself, but His soul. The Eternal Wisdom was not sorrowful, the Divine being was not sorrowful, but the human soul of Jesus was sorrowful."

Let us think of the exceeding bitterness and grief with which the heart of Jesus was overwhelmed in the garden, when He fell on His face and cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away; but not My will, but Thine, be done." What could He do more, to show us how fully and painfully He shared our nature, than by drinking this cup of ignominy and sorrow, from which His soul recoiled?

But He must suffer in body as well as in soul. He would prove Himself to be truly man, by all the torment of His passion. In the scourging at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, and in every drop of His Precious Blood which He shed on the cross, we learn the mystery of the Incarnation—that He who was true God was also true man, and, as man, was obedient unto death. Throughout all He was one and the same. "Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

And now, my dear brethren, how can we do our duty to the Incarnate God—to this Sovereign Lord Jesus Christ? What can we give Him? What can we offer that is worthy of Him? Our hearts are cold and our hands are empty. How can we make a sufficient acknowledgment, or give sufficient love to One who has loved us so much, and done so much for us? And yet the apostle says: "If any one love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (I. Cor. xvi. 22).

We will think not what He is to the race of men, but what He is to each one of us. He is our Saviour; every one who is redeemed from hell, and enters into the kingdom of heaven, is redeemed by His blood. That vast crowd that surrounds His throne cries out with one voice: "Thou hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Apoc. v. 9). If I am saved, it will certainly be by the merits of the Precious Blood; how, then, ought I to love Him who poured it out for me?

"Of His fulness we all have received," by whatever channel grace has been given to me; whoever the creatures may be who have helped me on my course to eternal life—all that I have received has really come to me from "the fountains of my Saviour." Our Lord is our only Redeemer, "by whom we have access, through faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and glory in the hope of the glory of the Son of God" (Rom. v. 2); and, at the same time, He is our only model. St. Paul says: "Be ye imitators of me, as I also am of Christ" (I. Cor. iv. 16). All the examples of holiness that we find amongst creatures are to be imitated only because they are formed on the pattern of the Son of God. He is the great model for all classes of people—for priest and for layman, for young and for old, for rich and for poor; He is our model in our prayers and in our daily duties, in work and in suffering, in life and in death. "Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29).

If we would be saved, then, we have to strive to make ourselves like to Him in all things, and the more closely we imitate Him in our lives, the greater will be our perfection in the sight of God. "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is, and every one that hath this hope in him sanctifieth Himself, as He also is holy (I St. John iii. 2).

What higher task can we have, my dear brethren, than to be imitators of this great Lord, who condescended to come down from His throne of glory to set us an example. He is the

object of the wonder and admiration of all the angels of God. He was the pattern of all the saints in heaven, and it was by being like unto Him that they obtained the surpassing glory which they enjoy.

But, above all things, He is the special object of our love. In the Incarnation the eternal God willed to show the infinite love which He has for His creatures. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3). This infinite and everlasting love was most conspicuously displayed in His coming down to be the Saviour of His creatures; "for God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (St. John iii. 16). As it is in the Incarnation that He has most displayed His love for men, so in the Incarnation He specially calls upon us to give Him our hearts, and to make the best return we can for the infinite love which He has shown to us.

Oh, my dear brethren, would that we could say with the Apostle: "I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38).

SERMON VII.

The New Year.

"Thou art the self-same, and Thy years shall not fail" (Heb. i. 12).

THESE words, my dear brethren, have for us to-day a special significance. We have come to the end of one year, and are just entering upon another. All the joys and sorrows of the past year have disappeared, and the bells that announce a New Year remind us powerfully of the passage of time.

Our lives are gliding away from us like the smooth, swift current of a river: the rapidity of the stream is not noticed until something comes to obstruct its course, and then the ripple of the water shows how fast it is going. In the same way our lives pass, and it is such celebrations as the New Year which bring to our remembrance the rapid progress of time.

On such occasions we cannot but think of the infinite greatness of Almighty God, and the immense distance which separates Him from His creation. Whilst we, and all creatures with us, are hurrying on in this rapid course of time—growing old, and changing every moment, He is "our Father from eternity to eternity" (1 Par. xxix. 10). "With whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration" (St. James i. 17). This earth, and the universe around us, have existed for long ages—in comparison with which the duration of the life of man is but a moment: and yet the earth and all things are, like ourselves, only running their appointed course and growing old. "The Lord God Almighty is, and was, and is to come" (Ap. xi. 17).

"Thou in the beginning, O Lord, didst found the earth; and the works of Thy hands are the heavens. They shall perish, but Thou shalt continue, and they shalt grow old as a garment: and as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the self-same, and Thy years shall not fail" (Heb. i. 10). God is infinite and eternal, unmovable and unchangeable; He is "patient because He is eternal," and "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II. St. Peter iii. 8). "He is the living and eternal God for ever; and His kingdom shall not be destroyed, and His power shall be for ever" (Dan. vi. 26). What an awful contrast does this Being of God present to the perpetual hurry and change of human life—to our failing years and speedy growing old!

Such thoughts as these, my dear brethren, ought to fill our minds as we celebrate the beginning of the New Year which God has given us. We should pause for a moment on the brink of this new period of time into which, if we may say so, we are plunging, to thank God for the years He has bestowed upon us, and, moreover, to look back over our past lives, and forwards to the time to come. A traveller, when he reaches a resting-place in his journey, pauses to look back over the road he has travelled —to think how far he has got on his way, and of the path that lies hidden before him which he must traverse before he comes to his journey's end. Such days as the present ought to make even the most careless amongst us think a little of the past and of the future.

We have passed over a certain portion of our lives: over the greatest part of them it may be, and the time has gone and slipped away out of our hands for ever for good or for evil. We shall certainly have to account for it all, but we can change nothing: we must face the past such as it is. In a few years we shall come to a day when the whole of our lives will be to us, as is now the year 1881, a confused memory of past events, of thoughts, and of words, which seem to have gone by almost in a moment—which appear to be imperfect, and to have been interrupted in the middle, and yet which are absolutely finished and unchangeable. Is this all that my life was to produce? Is this the end of all my plans and aspirations? "Whilst I was yet but beginning He cut me off" (Isaias xxxviii. 12). How far have we come on our journey? How much remains for us still? Can we be reasonably well satisfied with the progress we are making towards our journey's end? These are the questions which every one, who thinks at all, will naturally ask himself on such a day as that of the New Year.

Our first thought, however, ought to be one of thankfulness to Almighty God. A year of our lives has passed, and we must not forget that it was God's gift, and was filled with the good things for body and soul which God granted to us. How many pleasures have been allowed to us in the course of it, and how many pains have been spared us? The enjoyments of the past year are all gone now, but they were very pleasant whilst they lasted, and perhaps they did their work very well—that is, they enabled us to persevere, and to go through what might have been too great a burden for our strength if God's Providence had not lightened it as it did. How many dangers have we avoided in the course of the year in which we might have perished? "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh to thee" (Ps. xc. 7).

Has it not been so with us—and should we not now thank God? We know of many dangers that have been near us—but how many more have there been of which we had no idea?

God's good Providence, then, has kept us out of many perils, and, we may most of us add, has supported us in many trials and pains, and has at last brought us safely to the beginning of a New Year. Surely our first thought ought to be to thank Him. We can do nothing else; we have no other return in our power—the least we can do is to love and to thank Him who has been so gracious and tender towards us.

The temporal goods and blessings we have received, are, however, of little real value in comparison with the spiritual advantages and means of progress which have been bestowed on us. We have to thank God for all the good we have done, which, we know very well, has all been done by His grace. It may be very little, but, whatever it is that we have done or suffered for God in the past year, "shall not lose its reward." Some day, perhaps, little things which we have long forgotten, and which were but trifles in themselves, will appear and speak powerfully in our behalf. Of good deeds as well as of evil ones, God says: "Are not these things stored up with me, and sealed up in my treasures?" (Deut. xxxii. 34).

We have, then, to thank our Lord for all the treasures which His grace has enabled us to lay up for ourselves, since, without Him, we could have done nothing. But how much more we might have done! How fruitful in good works might this past year have been made, if we had only been zealous in good works, and striven hard to make use of the time and grace bestowed on us! We should be grateful not only for the good actually done, but for all the *opportunities* of good which have been given to us—even if we are conscious that we have not used these opportunities as we might have done. The year has been full of the means of grace. What copious fountains of grace have been placed before us during the year! "They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun strike them: for He that is merciful shall be their shepherd, and at the fountains of water He shall give them drink" (Isaias xlix. 10). These words have been spiritually fulfilled in our case.

Has not our Lord again and again honoured and enriched us all by the Sacraments His love has provided? Would He not, moreover, have done so much more abundantly, if only we had faithfully listened to His calls? Has He not, besides, shown great compassion for our weakness, and kept us out of temptation? Which of us would have been able to stand if the Lord had not "made, with temptation, issue that you might be able

to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13) If we had been tempted as grievously as some of the worst of those around us, perhaps we might have fallen as badly as any of them. When we come to the end of the year therefore safe in body and soul, the least we can do is to praise and glorify our Father in heaven, by whom all good has been given, and all evil and danger warded off.

Our gratitude should, however, be largely mixed up with a feeling of regret for the faults and imperfections of which we have been guilty. If we could only see before us the sins of this past year—not in the vague way in which we now remember them—not with all the palliations and excuses with which our own self-love covers them, but as we certainly shall see them one day, complete in their number and their weight, with all those circumstances which have aggravated the guilt of them: if we could see the past year in this way, we should most of us feel that we had plenty of ground for sufficient sorrow and self-reproach. Have we not, perhaps, tried God's patience and forbearance to the utmost? If we think of all the deliberate, reiterated sins of which most of us have been guilty—of the way in which we have resisted God's grace, and, perhaps, fallen back, again and again, into the same sins, we shall be inclined to remember our Lord's words to the Jews: "How long shall I be with you?" "How long shall I suffer you?" (St. Mark ix. 18). And to think that we have given Him great reason to use the same words about us. In the Old Law Almighty God said of the Jews: "Forty years was I offended with that generation, and I said: these always err in heart" (Ps. xciv. 10). Have we not gone on "erring in heart" as the Jews did? have we not, perhaps, been for "forty years" offensive to Him, as they were —and yet He has suffered us. It may be that we have done much evil in the past, and have lost many opportunities of good: it may be that, by our sins, we have contracted debts to the justice of God, which we shall have one day to pay, but, after all, we have been brought safely to the year's end, and still have before us a future which can do so much to remedy the evil. Our thoughts ought, therefore, to be chiefly directed forwards, to the time to come.

We must not forget the past year, because we owe a debt both of thankfulness and of sorrow; but our great idea, the special feeling of this day, should be one of hopeful anticipation and good resolution. We should all be full of the thought, how we can best spend the New Year that God has given us: "One thing I do forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press forwards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus"

(Phil. iii. 13). These words of the apostle, my dear brethren, are words which we may well take as our motto for the New Year which we are about to begin. When we look forward into the future, we are like the traveller who looks out from the hill-top over a strange and new country that lies before him: he can see his road but a few steps in advance, and then all is concealed from his sight, and he knows not which way it will turn. We cannot tell what this year will bring us. Will it be good or bad? Bring joy or sorrow? Will it be the critical and turning-point of our lives? or will it, perhaps, be the last year that God will be pleased to allow us? It may be that this very coming year is the year of our death, and that 1882 is the date to be written on our tombs: nay, we are certain that it will be inscribed on the graves of many of us—yours or mine. What is coming we cannot tell—we are going out into the darkness, and must simply accept all that God's Providence may design for us.

The New Year, however, seems to come to us a pledge for the future, and as a promise of God's grace and favour. Why has He had patience with us so long, and brought us safe to welcome once more the New Year?—*not*, we fondly hope, that we may fill up the measure of our iniquities, but as a crowning mercy, to complete all the favours which we have received.

How much can be done in this one year, even if it should be the last of our lives? There is scarcely any limits to its possibilities. Our Master has given to the time that remains for us—be it long or short—the wondrous power of making up for all that has gone before. As He tells us in the parable, the last hour which remains, even when the work seems well-nigh done, may be so employed as to make us equal to those "who have borne the burden of the day and the heat," so that no one should be able to say that it was too late to begin.

"See therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. v. 15).

The New Year, then, has been given to us that we may redeem the past and make up for what has been badly spent. It is an inestimable treasure for all who know how to use it. To the young, how valuable a possession is the future that lies stretched out before them, full of promise, full of hope! What may they not do with all the time that is given them!—with all the vigour and freshness of youth which is theirs? How joyous and precious to them are the years of life! And to the old, is it not even more precious? If but a little remains to them, and that little seems slipping from them very fast, it has become for that very reason more precious. It is the autumn, the time

for gathering in the harvest, when they have to make the most of all the summer's toil and pain. The harvest took the long toil of the spring and the summer to plant and to mature; but a few days of the autumn are sufficient to gather in all the fruits: and so it is in our lives. But those who are gathering in the harvest must work hard, because the winter is at hand, and the light is failing, and "the night cometh when no man can work" (St. John ix. 4).

All men may welcome the New Year with thankfulness: if we have been trying to lead good lives and to serve God we may think that a part of our dangerous course is over, and that every little good deed we have done, and every pain and self-denial we have suffered in the service of God, will be amply considered. All these things will be valued by a kind and indulgent Master, not for their own sake, but for the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ: and for every such deed there is laid up for us a reward of grace in this life, and of glory to come. We must think, moreover, that God's grace, which has led us so far in safety, will certainly not abandon us, but will enable us to persevere to the end. Those who have been careless and done nothing as yet should thank God still more for the future, of which this New Year is a sign and a pledge. It may be—for them—that one last special season of grace which has been given to make amends for all that has gone before. "Behold for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground? But he answering, said to Him, Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it and dung it: and if haply it bear fruit: but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down" (St. Luke xiii. 7).

What have we ourselves done? May it not be said of us: "Why cumbereth it the ground?"

Each one, then, in his own heart, has abundant reason for thanking God for this New Year given to us, and may well consider it as given by God's special mercy to enable Him to accomplish His salvation. Such, Christians, are some of the thoughts you should have for a New Year; but the good the year brings us will depend on the use we make of it: it is a gift for good or for evil, as it may be employed. We all have a vague idea that the future will do something wonderful for us—that some day we shall find it much easier to be good—that later on in life we shall have no difficulty in being better Christians than we now are. The future comes and goes, and finds us much the same: how many "future years" can we remember that are now long past, and how little we did in them when they came! It is a great delusion trusting to the

future if we do not set to work in earnest. We should therefore begin the year with good resolutions—not resolutions as to what we will do at some distant day, but resolutions which we can try, at least, to put in practice at once. "And I said, Now have I begun: this is the change of the right hand of the Most High" (Ps. lxxvi. 11). All real resolutions should be, like this of the Psalmist, to begin *now*—not at some future time.

We are apt to be weary of good resolutions, and to think how many we have made, and how easily we have broken them. Let us not lose courage. Life is a warfare, and, through a number of partial defeats, we shall march on to victory if only we persevere. Every real good resolution which we form, and every effort we make to put it in practice, is at least something done—it is at least one blow directed against the enemy. We begin the year with the invocation of the Holy Spirit, and this must remind us of the first essential for success---that we are to trust in all we do to the guiding grace of God, and not to rely upon our own strength. We beg the Spirit of God to "fill our hearts," and to "kindle in them the fire of His love." With this fire once burning within us, all things will be easy; with His help we could accomplish much more difficult things than will ever be asked of us.

The first day of the New Year is the Feast of the Circumcision. Our Lord presents Himself to us on this day, as He does at Christmas, as our tender, loving Infant Saviour; but it is not with the joy of Christmas. On this day He would begin His lessons to us, and He teaches us by suffering. He shed His blood for the first time in order to show us how completely He had identified Himself with that sinful race which He came down on earth to save. He would begin His life as the sons of men do—in wailing, tears, and suffering; He would take upon Himself the mark of a sinner, and all the obligations and burdens of sin. He was circumcised in obedience to the law laid upon His people, and by that very act He undertook to be obedient in all things, and received upon His shoulders the whole burden of the law. St. Paul tells us that he who is circumcised is "a debtor to the whole law" (Gal. v. 3), and, by His own will, Jesus took that burden on Himself.

Pause for a moment, my dear brethren, and think how heavy was the burden which our Infant Saviour willingly and knowingly took upon Himself on this first day of the year, when He chose to be called by His sweet name of Jesus! He took upon Himself the sins of men, which are represented by the whole ceremonial of the Mosaic Law, with its obligations and sacrifices. He undertook also to bear the punishments of sin—the labours,

pains, and vexations of human life on earth—its inevitable weariness and suffering—and, at last, the death, which is its appropriate termination.

In this first shedding of His blood our Lord foresaw and accepted all the ignominy and pain which He was to undergo. He had before Him the ingratitude and rejection of His own people—the abandonment and desolation of His Passion, and its end in the ignominy and torment of the cross.

Our Lord puts before us the picture of Himself, on this first day of a New Year, that we may have a good will and a good heart to undertake the burdens of the time to come, and, as the apostle says, to "run by patience to the fight proposed to us, looking on Jesus—the author and finisher of faith—who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. For think diligently on Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds—for you have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin" (Heb. xii. 1).

If you would make this year profitable to your salvation, and turn its days into gold, you must accept in your hearts the example which our Lord gives us; you must take upon you the yoke as He did. He does not ask you to bear a hard and heavy burden, such as He Himself bore, for He says: "Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls, for My yoke is sweet and My burden light" (St. Matt. xi. 29). Our Lord's yoke is sweet and light, and is one which brings rest to the souls of those who bear it; and still, after all, it *is* a yoke, and therefore our first duty is to take up this yoke cheerfully and lovingly, and bear it faithfully.

Men sometimes complain of the law of God, and find it hard and wearisome. Is not this because they have never realized that it is, and was intended to be, a yoke; and, accordingly, they have never accepted this yoke in earnest, or bowed their necks to it? If this is the way in which they pretend to follow Christ, it is not to be wondered at if they find His commandments hard. Those who take up the yoke of obedience willingly, and endeavour heartily to carry out God's commandments, may say, with the Psalmist: "The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves—more to be desired than gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, for thy servant keepeth them, and in keeping them there is a great reward" (Ps. xviii. 10).

To come to a practical conclusion, let us consider a little

more in detail what are the good resolutions which we are to make at the beginning of the year. If this year is to be your last, what would you wish to have done in it? The first thing clearly is to be diligent and punctual in all the outward duties of religion. Duties of this kind are a sort of framework, on which all real and trustworthy interior feelings rest. What we do externally is the great test of obedience and charity. "If you love Me, keep My commandments." These external duties of religion are regulated by the laws of the Church, inasmuch as Christ has left it to His Church to regulate the details of His service. We have, then, to take up Christ's yoke, in the first place, by loyally and diligently carrying out the duties imposed on us by the Church in God's name. This is sometimes a hard thing to do. The mere fact that commands come to us through the medium of other men is very often a great trial of obedience.

The two great things asked of us are—diligence in going to the Sacraments, and care in sanctifying Sunday. It is hardly too much to say that you would certainly make the coming year a time of blessing if you would only attend to these points. If you would go to Confession and Communion, not just when you pleased, but at such regular intervals as were suited to your condition of life, and, at the same time, made every Sunday a day of real piety and devotion, I do not think God would ever let you go far astray. If you look back to past irregularities, you will generally find that they depend on neglect of the Sacraments, and coldness and carelessness in your duty on Sundays. It is not a great thing to promise our Lord diligence in these two points.

The object of all external things in religion is to help you to pray, and to co-operate with your prayers, and, if you are to make external devotion profitable, it must be by the spirit of prayer. "Let nothing hinder thee from praying always, and be not afraid to be justified even to death; for the reward of God continueth for ever" (Ecclus. xviii. 22). It is the spirit of prayer which is the great characteristic of good Christians, and this spirit depends upon, and keeps us, in a sense, in the presence of God. "In Him we live and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28); and yet it is very easy to have our hearts for Him. My brethren, if you would make this year a blessed time, enter daily into the great and all-holy presence of God; do not be contented with mere forms of words, but "enter into thy chamber, and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret" (St. Matt. vi. 6). Shut the door of your heart against all outward things, and do not be contented till you feel that you are face to face with your Creator in prayer. If you will do this at least once

a day, when the work of daily life is done, you will find strength to overcome all temptation. Is it a difficult thing to ask? Is it not the greatest of Christian privileges to be allowed thus to speak to his Creator?

We are beginning this year, my dear brethren, in company with the Infant Jesus and His Blessed Mother, and He calls us, as it were, to enter into His family, and to work and suffer with Him, and then He promises us His reward. In all the work we may have to do, let us remember the Holy House of Nazareth, and how our Lord toiled and laboured for us. He did not disdain to bear the burden of the day and the heats, that He might encourage us to share our labours with Him. No matter how hard or how uninviting may be the work to which you are called, or how great the trials you may have to bear, you may make them all sweet and easy, if you will only think that you are doing them for and with our Lord. "All whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Colos. iii. 17).

SERMON VIII.

The Infant Jesus.

"Come, let us adore and fall down, and weep before the Lord that made us" (Ps. xciv. 6).

THE one great thought which ought to fill our minds during this octave is the adoration and love due to our Infant Saviour. The Church, indeed, surrounds the festival of Christmas with a number of other beautiful feasts: St. Stephen, the first martyr, St. John, the beloved disciple, the Holy Innocents, and our own St. Thomas of Canterbury, are all commemorated on the days immediately following the Nativity, but they seem put there as a guard of honour around the great feast, and through them all runs the sweet memory of Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem. The words of the *Adeste Fideles* seem ever in our ears: *Natum videte, Regem angelorum: venite adoremus Dominum*—"to Bethlehem your praises bring, behold the new-born angels' King; come, let us adore."

You have all, I hope, my dear brethren, made your Christmas visit and your Christmas offering to our Divine Lord. You have been, in spirit, with the shepherds to the stable, to take your first look at your new-born Saviour, and to pay Him your first adoration; you have looked into His face, and He has looked into your heart; you have made Him, at least, one act of tender and disinterested love, and, in return, have received His blessing.

In a worthy Communion at Christmas you do all this—not in spirit only, but in reality. You have then present before you the very same infant Jesus as He reposed, that Christmas night, on the straw of the manger; He is there in the Sacrament, which is the continuation of the Nativity, and which most perfectly represents the stillness and peace of Christmas night. In the Holy Sacrament our Lord once more grants to His faithful the privilege and joy which He allowed to the shepherds, and renews the abundant blessings He bestowed upon them. But it is not for one night only. Our Lord does not come to pay us a passing visit, but to abide in the midst of us. He has taken our nature, and would endure all its hardships and trials. He would make His home in the midst of us, and become one of ourselves, that we might study Him and learn His spirit.

We must, then, place the Infant Jesus before our eyes during

this season, and make Him the object of our perpetual wonder and admiration, of our tender love and sincere imitation; let us lay up in our hearts every detail of our Lord's Nativity, His surroundings, and every movement, and cry, and look of that Sacred Infant who has come down from heaven to be our model.

"And they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger. And seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child. And all that heard wondered" (St. Luke ii. 16). The shepherds went away, astonished at what they had seen. Well might they be astonished, for the mystery which God has accomplished in the midst of us on this day, will be for ever the admiration of angels and of men.

The Incarnation is a mystery which overpowers our understandings, and wonders grow before our eyes as we ponder upon it. It is the mystery of God's condescension to creatures; whereas, by His own nature, He is infinitely distant from all the things which He has made, and all creatures are, before Him, but dust and ashes, and as though they had no being at all, He condescended to come down and to be one of them. "He bowed the heavens and came down" (Ps. xvii. 10). He alone could pass over that infinite gulf which divides the Creator from His creatures, and He did so by taking to Himself a human nature. The nature He thus assumed to Himself was so intimate and personal, that He was at once God and man, Creator and creature, Infinite and finite.

All the other wonders of the Christian faith are easy and plain to us in comparison with the one great mystery on which it is founded. The Lord on earth did many marvels, but not one of them could compare in wonder with the fact that He Himself was God and man. The doctrines of the Christian religion are mysterious and quite beyond our comprehension, but they are as nothing in comparison to the mystery of God becoming man—nay, they are the natural result or consequence of His coming. The Psalmist says: "Clouds and darkness are around about Him; justice and judgment are the foundation of His throne" (Ps. xcvi. 2); and when the infinitely mysterious and incomprehensible God comes amongst us, we can only expect that everything which surrounds Him will be mysterious also.

God is wonderful in His dealings with men. "God is wonderful in His saints" (Ps. lxvii. 36). He is equally wonderful on His patience and long-suffering with sinners. But, these wonders are but the reflection, if we may say so, of the marvels

of the Incarnation. The Church which God has established upon earth, and supports with such unwearied patience; the Sacraments which He has ordained, and in which He never fails to carry out what He has promised and begun, are only the continuation of what He did when He "came unto His own and His own received Him not." They received Him not, and yet He went on patiently labouring, suffering, and doing good amongst them. So He goes on working in His Church, in spite of all the shortcomings of men; though He is reviled and rejected, yet He perseveres.

"All the days of the earth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, shall not cease" (Gen. viii. 22). As it was in the world of nature, so it is in the world of grace, and God is faithful to His promises, in spite of the ingratitude of His creatures.

The great thought of this time, then, should be astonishment and wonder at the things that God has done, in the midst of us, in the Incarnation of His Son. "Whence is this to me," says St. Elizabeth, "that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"—whence is it to us that the great and Eternal Lord, the "King of ages, immortal and invisible," should come to us?—that He who "inhabiteth light inaccessible" should deign to come down and dwell in the midst of us? "Come, let us adore, and fall down, and weep before the Lord that made us." Wherever He goes, He carries with Him the right to the supreme adoration of all His creatures. He may lay aside His glory, and "humble Himself, taking the form of a servant," but He cannot be otherwise than infinitely worthy of honour and adoration.

In the stable at Bethlehem, in the weakness of His infancy, in the ignominy of His passion, in the Blessed Sacrament, where He lies hid, despised by men, or unknown to them, He has always the same right to adoration which belongs to Him when seated on the throne of His glory.

"When He bringeth in the First-Begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God adore Him" (Heb. i. 6). Let us fancy to ourselves the adoration of this Christmas night —see the angels of God coming down to adore the new-born Lord—angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, leaving their thrones in heaven, to cast their crowns humbly at the feet of God incarnate; to offer Him their homage, and shelter Him with their wings! Let us go with them, and fall down and weep before the Lord who made us. Let us weep tears of joy and thankfulness for this great mystery which has been accomplished for our sakes, and tears of sympathy and love for that

Infant Lord who has deigned this day to come on earth to be our Saviour.

And now, my dear brethren, let us consider the lessons contained in the Gospel the Church reads to us on this Sunday. It is the last Sunday of the year: a year is gone, and a new one is opening before our eyes. One year, with all its pleasures and all its pains, with its responsibilities and its possibilities, has passed out of our lives, and we are entering upon an unknown region, over which a thick impenetrable veil is drawn. We do not know what this year will bring to any one of us: it may be a season of brightness and joy, or of calamity—we cannot tell: all that we do know is, that we must prepare ourselves manfully to meet whatever God's Providence has in store for us. Whatever it may be, His grace will be sufficient for us, if only we will rely on it, and correspond with its inspirations.

The Gospel goes on at once to the conclusion of the Christmas season—the day of the Purification—when the Child Jesus was presented in the temple according to the law of the Lord. The Church would make us take in at one glance the whole of our Lord's infancy, so as to make it all one lesson, that we may learn at once the teaching of all the great feasts which we are celebrating in honour of our Lord's Nativity.

"Joseph and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, were wondering at these things which were spoken concerning Him—and Simeon blessed them." The Gospel tells us how Mary came joyfully on the appointed day, to present her Infant Son, and to offer Him to the Lord, according to the law. Simeon had been preserved by a special Providence to accept this great offering on the part of God: he was appointed, in the name of all the patriarchs of the Old Law, to welcome the "Light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people, Israel:" it was his lot to bless the most blessed of the Lord—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Let us first think of the offering which Mary made in the temple, that we, too, may go into the temple of God when the new year comes, and make our offering as we ought. Mary came to present to God the greatest of all the offerings that had ever been made to Him in that temple. All the sacrifices that had been offered there were but types and figures of the gift of this day. She offered Him to do the will of His Eternal Father, and, with Him, she offered herself, and all her maternal feelings and affections. She offered her Son with joy and thankfulness, but behind all this she knew full well was the sword of grief which was to pierce her heart: she was, indeed, to buy Him back for the time with the sacrifice of the poor—the pair of

turtle doves which the law commanded—but the offering was to be for ever.

The sacrifice which God commanded Abraham to make was a type of this offering. "Take thy only-begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision, and there thou shalt offer him for a holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will show thee" (Gen. xxii. 2). Mary, too, was called upon to take her only Son, whom she loved so tenderly, and to offer Him for a holocaust to the Lord; but no angel was to interpose to prevent the completion of the sacrifice. God was satisfied with Abraham's obedience, and when the moment for the sacrifice arrived, God said to him: "Lay not thy hand upon the boy, neither do thou anything to him; now I know that thou fearest God, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for My sake" (Gen. xxii. 12). But Mary was to stand at the foot of the cross during those last three hours, and see the accomplishment of her sacrifice, whilst the terrible sword of grief and desolation pierced her very soul.

Can we find any better lesson for the beginning of a new year? God, my dear brethren, has given us many things, but they still belong to Him, and He has a right, at any time, to ask us to resign them. Your children, your friends, your time, your money, your very lives, belong to Him. They are yours, because He has entrusted them to you, but they are His also; and it is your first duty to surrender them to Him when such is His will, and to surrender them lovingly and willingly, as Mary did, even though you should have to share in her sword of grief. We do not sufficiently remember that what belongs to us, belongs still more to Him, and that we are unjust if we repine unreasonably if we are called on to give up to Him what is His own.

We cannot tell what sacrifices He will ask of us during this coming year; some things He will certainly ask for—the sacrifice of a part of the good things He has given. He will certainly ask you for some of your time, your labour, your worldly goods, and, perhaps, for still more painful sacrifices. He expects you to hold back nothing from Him; it may be that He will be content with your goodwill, as He was with Abraham's obedience; but it may be, also, that He will require the complete resignation of things most dear to you.

"Offer up the sacrifice of justice, and trust in the Lord" (Ps. iv. 6). Begin the year with a willingness of heart to offer to God, without reserve, whatever, in His wisdom, He may ask of you, and trust in the Lord: trust in God, that He will enable you to bear whatever trials your obedience may involve, and that He will make up to you for whatever sacrifice He may call

on you to make. Listen to the word of God to Abraham: "By My own self have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for My sake, I will bless thee, and multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is by the sea-shore: thy seed shall possess the gates of their enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice" (Gen. xxii. 16).

But it is not enough to give; that, indeed, we cannot help, but "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver," and we have to give willingly and lovingly, if we would make our offerings acceptable. How many are there who will make their sacrifices to God, during this year, not in the spirit of obedience, with cheerfulness and submission, but murmuring and complaining, and, as far as may be, rebelling against Him! They must make them at last, since His almighty will is not to be resisted; but they are not the "sacrifice of justice"—the sacrifice voluntarily made to Him who is the Supreme Master of all things, but the sacrifice of necessity, which brings no blessing or compensation with it.

But the words of holy Simeon teach us another lesson, and a terrible one. "This Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted." The coming of the Son of God was incomparably the greatest of all the blessings bestowed upon men, and was especially the blessing of God's chosen people. It was their great privilege that in them "all the nations of the earth should be blessed." The Lord was of their blood, of the lineage of their kings; His Blessed Mother was one of their maidens, and His apostles and chosen friends all of their own race. But they turned all these favours to their destruction; they rejected Him, and made Him a "sign to be contradicted," so that what was meant for their glory and happiness became, by their own perversity, the cause of their downfall.

So it has been in all ages: the perversity of men is always striving against the goodness of God, and turning His gifts against themselves. "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them" (II. St. Peter ii. 21). The day will come when Christians may learn, too late, the fearful truth of the apostle's words: when they may see that it would have been better for them never to have known Christ and His saving truths; better to have been heathens and idolators than to have lived as they have done.

As it was with the greatest of all favours, the coming of the Son of God amongst men, so is it with the rest of God's gifts. If we use them properly, they will make us rich in grace, and lead us to life everlasting; but, on the other hand, we may turn them against the Giver to our own destruction. We could hardly have a more important subject of consideration at the beginning of a new year. God has many gifts in store for us, and it depends upon ourselves how we shall use them.

Let us apply this practically. The greatest of all the favours which God has given to us is the knowledge of the Catholic faith. Catholics do not always think enough of this: they allow themselves, practically, to undervalue it, and are ungracious in their acknowledgment; but, still, no one who considered for a moment would venture formally to deny, even to himself, that his faith was the greatest of blessings. Consider how much is contained in it: a clear, certain knowledge of God and His truths, and a distinct and accurate notion of how to serve Him. We see around us numbers of people, much better than ourselves, wandering about in uncertainty and contradiction: they are one thing to-day, and another to-morrow—no two of them can agree very long about anything. They are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. iv. 14); whilst to us our Lord seems to say, as He did to the apostles, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to them that are without, all things are done in parables" (St. Mark iv. 11).

No Catholic can fail to see this, and he knows very well that if he fails in his duty, it is not from the want of a clear knowledge of what his duty is, and how he is to set about it. We forget, however, to ask ourselves why this clear knowledge has been given to us, whilst it has been denied to so many—and to many, as far as we can see, without any fault of their own. Is it, do you think, for any superior excellence of your own, that you have deserved it in any way? Or do you think that this grace is given to you that you may glorify yourselves, as the Jews did, when they said, "Abraham is our father?" I am afraid people do sometimes treat their religion as if it were a matter of personal glorification: they and their fathers before them have always been Catholics; they have done and suffered this and that for their faith.

It is, indeed, a great glory, my dear brethren, to have done and suffered anything for Christ, but it is not a thing of which any one may venture to boast: or the Lord may say to us as St. John said to the Jews: "I say to you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (St. Matt. iii. 9);

or, as He Himself said to His disciples: "Many shall come from the East and the West, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness" (St. Matt. viii. 11).

Our Lord gives us our faith, my dear brethren, simply that, as we know Him better, we may love Him better: that, as we have greater means of grace, we may produce more perfect and more abundant fruit; and that, as God has given us more than others, we may glorify Him more by our lives. This gives us a terrible idea of our responsibilities, and one which ought to make it impossible to treat the blessings of the Catholic faith in a flippant or careless way.

Look around, and see what signs there are of the love of God in the lives of many around us: see how boldly they speak up for the cause of God, as far as their knowledge goes: see how willing they are sometimes to make great sacrifices for Him—sacrifices of time, money, health, and even life. We cannot look into the hearts of men, but we may believe and hope that these external signs are true tokens that they have a real love of God, and a tender devotion to our Lord, as far as the light they have received, allows them to know Him. We bless and glorify God that it is so, and rejoice to think of any one soul, in the visible communion of the Church, or out of it, that really loves God, and is zealous for Him; but ought not we sometimes to strike our breasts and think how much more loving we ourselves ought to be?

Remember that the one thing which is of real value in the sight of God is love—not love that loses itself in mere words, but love which makes you strive with all your might to please God in all things, and makes you disinterested and self-sacrificing in His service. He who has most of this love is the highest in the kingdom of God: and, on the other hand, St. Paul says: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema."

Our Lord said to St. Peter: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? . . . feed my sheep." If we really love God, we must be ready to show it by doing something for the cause of God, and for His flock on earth. Zeal is the greatest of all the proofs of love, and if you have very little zeal, it is to be feared that you have very little love. Our Lord, therefore, gave you the knowledge which you have of your faith, and all the benefits of the Catholic religion, that you might have a great zeal for Him. Does your conduct show much of it? You cannot say that you have not sufficient opportunities of

zeal for God's service—things around you on all sides call for the exercise of zeal.

Again, God gave you faith, that you might glorify Him by your good example. "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father, who is in heaven" (St. Matt. v. 16). Would that we could always remember, my dear brethren, that God has made us Catholics that we might glorify Him by good example.

It is your duty to set an example in the world in which you live, not merely in the higher duties of faith, but in the affairs of common life. The world knows nothing of our religious life, and is quite unable to form an opinion about it; but it can judge of our conduct in daily life, and God has given to us all the exact knowledge and high motives which our faith supplies, that we may be an example to all men. Well, then, what do men say of us? Are they compelled to admit that we are just and upright, that we are charitable and forgiving, and that, at least, we act up to our professions? If they are obliged to do this, no matter whether they like us or not, we have done our work amongst them; but, if they say that we are like the rest of men, and not one bit more conscientious, or trustworthy, or charitable, then we have, to a great extent, failed in the duty for which God gave us our faith.

St. Paul says to his disciple St. Titus: "In all things show thyself an example of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity, the sound word that cannot be blamed, that he who is on the contrary part may be afraid, having no evil to say of us" (Titus ii. 7). This, then, is the duty of all Catholics in their daily life, to show an example of that "sound word which cannot be blamed" by conscientiousness and charity, so that even those who are out of the Church, and strangers to the Catholic faith, may have nothing to say against us.

What I have said about the great gift of faith applies to all the other things which God gives to us. In the coming year God's Providence will bestow on you many good things—worldly possessions and influence, health and strength, and many good gifts of body and mind. God gives them, indeed, in different measures, according to His good will, but we all have some of them. Even the poorest of us has a certain amount of influence and power in his own particular sphere of life. What have you done with all these so far? What do you propose to do with them in the year that is now to come? It is certain that you may use them either for good or for evil; they are all the gifts of God, and it is for you now to decide whether you will make His favours a blessing or a curse.

"And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee to their city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and was strengthened, and the grace of God was in Him." This is the concluding lesson of the day's Gospel. He who was the maker of the law did not disdain in "all things" to conform to it. Our Lord was pleased to observe every detail that had been commanded to the Jews. In His Circumcision, His Presentation, in the yearly visits to the Temple of Jerusalem, and in all the actions of His life, He showed this exactness. Can anything teach us more forcibly the importance of the external duties of religion? They were not necessary to Him, but they are necessary to us: they are, as we may say, the backbone of all religion, and you may be very sure that if you allow yourselves to be careless about the external worship of God, about assisting at Mass, and keeping Sunday holy, and performing all the other duties the Church lays upon you, you will fall away. By refusing to God the external homage which you owe Him, and neglecting His worship, you not only commit sin by disobedience, but you dry up the very sources of grace within you.

And now, my dear brethren, you are upon the point of entering upon the new year, and the last hours of this present year are slipping quickly away into eternity. Make, then, a loyal and generous offering of yourselves, of your time, of your strength, and all that you have, in union with the offering of Jesus and Mary in the temple, and, in return, confidently ask our Lord for His blessing and assistance during the new year, that with Him you may "grow and be strengthened," and the grace of God may be in you.

SERMON IX.

The Epiphany.

"For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace" (Isaias ix. 6).

On this day of the Epiphany, my dear brethren, our Lord presents Himself to us as "Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace." On Christmas Day He seems to hide His glory and dignity. He would be simply the "Child born to us, the Son given to us," who has come down on earth to share our poverty, and to take upon Himself the burden of our mortality; but the Epiphany is His "manifestation," and He calls upon heaven and earth to recognize Him as the "Ruler who is to rule His people."

He is still in the poor stable of Bethlehem, and His court consists of His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph; but the star has appeared in the East and brings His subjects from afar to pay Him homage.

All heaven and earth owned Him as Lord. To use the words of St. Gregory: "All things which He had made bore witness that their Maker was come. Let me reckon them after the manner of men. The heavens knew that He was God, and sent a star to shine over where He lay. The sea knew it, and bore Him up when He walked upon it. The earth knew it, and quaked when He died. The sun knew it, and was darkened. The rocks and walls knew it, and rent at the hour of His death. Hell knew it, and gave up the dead that were in it. And yet, up to this very hour, the hearts of unbelieving Jews will not acknowledge that He to whom all nature testified is their God, and, more hardened than the rocks, refuse to be rent by repentance."

The wise men come from the East, saying: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him." And King Herod, hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and by their very trouble they own the power of that new-born King who is manifested to them.

Let us go with the wise men to acknowledge and adore our

new-born Lord: "Entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His Mother; and falling down they adored Him." To the eyes of men He appears the weakest and most helpless of all creatures, and yet "the government is upon His shoulder," and in His hand is the sceptre with which "to execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jer. xxiii. 5), for "the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods" (Ps. xciv. 3); and "He hath on His garment, and on His thigh, written King of kings and Lord of lords" (Ap. xix. 16). It is this Child who is King of kings; it is He of whom it is written: "I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. ii. 8).

The special devotion of the day, my dear brethren, is to own the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ hidden by His human nature, and lovingly to acknowledge the royalty and empire which are concealed by the humility of the stable of Bethlehem. He lies before us, God and man: as God, the "ancient of days," who is from "eternity to eternity;" and, as man, the youngest born of all creation. As God the Almighty, "by whose ordinance the day goes on, for all things serve Him;" as man, the weakest and most dependent of all creatures. How must the angels have adored and wondered at the ways of God when first they came to pay their homage to their new-born Lord: "This is the work of the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes" (Ps. cxvii. 23).

The Epiphany is the manifestation of our Lord's universal dominion, and as such is the feast of the Catholicity of the Church. Up till this time a universal Church had been a thing unknown in the world. The special revelations of God had been given to one people, and His covenant had been made with them alone. The prophets had been sent by God to one nation: they had been "sent to the house of Israel," and no one had appeared who had a claim to a wider authority. The law and the prophets, indeed, had in them the promise of something greater—they were for a time only, and to bear witness to the coming of a wider kingdom—but their commission was to one family, and the law they taught was strictly a national religion. It was essentially mixed up with the temporal government, with the habits and usages of one race of men, and adapted to one country only, and it clearly was never intended for the whole world.

Nothing could be more plainly national than the Jewish Church. The sacrifices must all be offered up to God in the

temple of Jerusalem, and the Jewish people were commanded to go up to Jerusalem on the great feasts every year. The priesthood was hereditary in one family, so that no one who was not of the house of Aaron could minister at God's altar, and every detail of the ceremonial was clearly ordered for one people exclusively. But this was only a period of preparation, and the time was to come when the Church of God was to be universal, and to belong to all the world. "The hour cometh when you shall neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem adore the Father" (St. John iv. 21). But "from the rising of the sun to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles" (Mal. i. 11).

Our Lord came, not as the prophets had done, with a mission to one country and people, but for all the sons of men, and accordingly he was to found a religion which was to be spread throughout the world, and to belong to all the world alike. He was to break down that wall of separation which had hitherto divided the Church of God on earth from the rest of the world, and in the feast which we are celebrating He strikes the first blow.

He sent His angels to summon His chosen people of the Jews, and they came to Bethlehem to "see this word which has come to pass, which the Lord had shown them," and "they came in haste and found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in the manger" (St. Luke ii. 16). But the Gentiles, also, must have their Christmas Day, and the star brings them to Jerusalem, on the Epiphany—"and behold the star, which they had seen in the East, went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy: and entering in they found the Child with Mary His Mother: and falling down they adored Him: and opening their treasures they offered Him gifts—gold, frankincense and myrrh" (St. Matt. ii. 9). All the nations of the world—Jews and Gentiles—were invited to come by their representatives to pay their homage at Bethlehem, and they all came on equal terms, to show that now there was to be no longer any division on account of race or country, but that the new-born King had come as the common Saviour of the whole human race, and was to establish a Church which should embrace them all.

These wise men who came from the East represented all the nations of the world that were not of the chosen people of the Jews; and went as a solemn embassy to welcome the Saviour of men, on behalf of all the races of mankind. They went in the name of Romans and Greeks, Orientals and barbarians—of all the people then existing upon earth—to offer homage and loyalty

to "Him who was born King of the Jews," and not only of the Jews, but of all mankind. We, too, were represented in this solemn embassy, and the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which were offered to the Infant Jesus, were the token of the loyalty, love, and worship which were promised in our name.

The call of the Gentiles to Bethlehem at our Lord's nativity was the first step towards the abolition of the exclusive national privileges of the Jews; the last step was when "the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom" (St. Matt. xxvii. 51), when Jesus died upon the cross. The Holy of Holies, which had been so carefully hidden from the eyes of men, that no one but the high priest could enter therein, was now laid open to the gaze of all mankind, and the knowledge and worship of the true God—which has been, to a great extent, hidden and confined to one nation—had become the common property of all mankind.

Our Lord sent His apostles, not as the prophets had been sent, to a single nation, but to all mankind. "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth; going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (St. Matt. xxviii. 18). "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (St. Mark xvi. 15). What possible commission could have been wider?—what words could have more fully expressed the total abolition of all local or national distinctions?

The universality of the Church was most beautifully shadowed forth on the great day when our Lord formally sent it forth into the world by the coming down of His Holy Spirit. "Now there were at Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven, and they were all amazed and wondered, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans, and have we not heard every man our own tongue wherein we were born?" (Acts. ii. 5). This was to be the characteristic of our Lord's Church upon earth—that it should belong to no one language, but should know how to speak to every man alike "as the tongue wherein he is born." All distinctions of race or nationality were to be abolished in the Church, so that there should be "neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ all in all" (Colos. iii. 11).

From this time forth there could be no such thing as a National Church, since Catholicity was to be the mark of a Divine institution, and any community which declared itself

to be National, was, by that very fact, cut off from all claim to be considered as the Church of God.

Yet, with all this wide extension throughout the world there was to be but one Church, as conspicuous for its unity as for its Catholicity. The Jews and the Gentiles were led to the one same house of the Lord, where they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger, and were admitted to the fellowship of the same Holy Family. The house of the Lord was to be the abode of peace, wherein all the divisions that separate men outside should be hushed; there was, our Lord Himself tells us, to be "one fold and one Shepherd" (St. John x. 16). St. Paul says: "One body and one Spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism . . . . that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men" (Eph. iv. 4–14).

To establish such a Church was, indeed, a work for none less than a Divine Founder. Thus, to combine unity of faith with an extension throughout the whole world, is something far beyond the power of man, and this is the special glory of the Catholic Church. We must rejoice, then, with the Holy Church —with "that Jerusalem which is above, which is our mother" (Gal. iv. 26). Let us join heartily in the words of the prophet which are read on this day: "Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold darkness shall cover the earth and a mist the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes round about and see: all these are gathered together, they are come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Madian and Epha; all they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense, and showing forth praise to the Lord" (Isaias lx. 1).

During the octave of the Epiphany, the Holy Mass used to be celebrated in the city of Rome in all the different languages and rites to be found in her communion. The same Mass, with the same faith and the same obedience, was to be heard in a number of different tongues, with all the ancient Oriental ceremonies, and with liturgies going back to the times of the apostles. Nothing could more beautifully express the

Catholicity and unity of the Church—nothing could better remind us of the crowd assembled round the apostles when they had just received the Holy Spirit. "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia," or of the words I have quoted: "All they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense, and showing forth praise to the Lord."

Our Lord manifests Himself on this day as Ruler and King, and he does so in many ways. The angels in heaven do His will, and offer Him their adoration. "When He bringeth His first-begotten Son into the world He saith, And let all the angels of God adore Him" (Heb. .i 6). All creatures in heaven and upon earth serve Him. "The winds and the sea obey Him." "Fire, hail, snow, stormy winds which fulfil His word" (Ps. cxlviii. 8); and the star which guides His subjects to His feet may be taken as the emblem of His universal sovereignty.

But our thoughts are most attracted by one special dominion which He shows—and that is, the dominion over the hearts of men. The star was the outward symbol, but He Himself was the magnet that drew His creatures towards Him. Though hidden in the stable at Bethlehem, His influence over them could not be resisted, and Jews and Gentiles came to adore Him. When He was passing from place to place in Judea the multitudes flocked to hear Him. They followed Him into the desert, forgetting their own homes and occupations; they pressed upon Him, and would not be kept away. Those whom He called to follow Him left their father and their nets, and "leaving all things, they followed Him."

At all times—in His cradle, during the time of His miracles and preaching, and, most of all, during His Passion—He draws the hearts of His creatures towards Him. "And I, if I shall be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself. Now this He said, signifying what death He should die" (St. John xii. 32). From the hour of His Passion till this present moment He has gone on drawing souls to Him on the cross, raising them up above this earth, and attaching them to Himself. His apostles went out into an unfriendly world to preach a Gospel which was "to the Jews a scandal, and to the Gentile foolishness," and the world fought bitterly against it; but the hearts of men were drawn, in spite of themselves, by the secret power which accompanied them, and this power was the attraction of our Lord Himself.

As years went on, the world scoffed and persecuted, and "said all that was evil" against His followers for His name sake, and drove them to hide themselves under ground for their lives, and

take shelter in the Catacombs; but in a few years our Lord from His cross, had drawn His enemies to Himself, and His faith was triumphant. "What thinkest thou hath made the light of faith so suddenly and brightly to shine in the whole world but the preaching of the name of Jesus? Is it not in the light of this name that God hath called us into His marvellous light?" These words of St. Bernard put before us what was the one great attraction which drew all men to His Church—it was Himself. It was in His name, and for Him, that the martyrs braved all that the power of the world could do. They were willing to suffer and die because they had Him in their hearts, and they were attracted to Him in such a manner as to leave all and forget all. So, too, in our own day, as in all former ages, we have seen men attracted to the Church of God, and coming, not in ones and twos, but in hundreds, and doing so in spite of every consideration of earthly loss or inconvenience. It was nothing that we could do that drew them; it was no fine theory that brought them. It was our Lord Himself in His Church; it was His star, shining in the hearts of men, that brought them to adore Him in His Church. It very often brought them, like the wise men, from a far country and through difficult paths. "Thy sons shall come from afar;" "the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising."

Let us, then, my dear brethren, go in spirit to Bethlehem, there to contemplate Him as the King and Ruler of the hearts of men. He rules them not by power—though "in His hands are power and dominion"—but by gentleness. He wishes to subject them, but by a willing and joyful obedience, and He wishes them to serve, because "to serve Him is to reign." His grace goes forth over the whole earth, and "breatheth where it will," and will not return to Him empty. Some souls He is, perhaps, bringing on slowly to the knowledge of His true Catholic faith. They may be afar off, and not know their way, and may have no idea whither they are going. No matter, so long as, in good faith, they follow the light that is given to them, and do not stand still or turn away; the star will guide them, and never leave them, but "go before them, until it comes and stands over where the Child is."

Others, again, our Lord is leading by His grace on the still more difficult path of obedience. It is hard for them to obey and to take up the yoke. It is difficult for them to overcome the perversity and self-seeking of human nature and to fight against temptation. They are weak, and the world has a powerful hold on them; but, if only they will yield themselves to the guidance of grace, all difficulties will disappear, and each step

that they take will show the road before them more plainly—"a good understanding to all that do it" (Ps. cx. 10). Some, again, there are whom our Lord is leading on to special perfection, and, perhaps, to a higher calling. It may be that He has chosen them for great things and for a great reward, as He did St. Paul, when He said: "Go thy way, for this man is to Me a vessel of election to carry My name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel, for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts ix. 15).

In all these different ways our Lord is working in the souls of men, and His attraction and His empire over hearts leads them, as the star of Bethlehem led the wise men from the East. There are some who yield themselves entirely to His guidance, and are anxious to find it, and ready to follow the light whithersoever it may conduct them. They only want to know the will of God, and then they are ready to do it; and, with St. Peter's spirit, they would say: "Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death" (St. Luke xxii. 33). These the grace of God leads on through all difficulties and over all obstacles. There are many, again, who are like the inhabitants of Jerusalem—they see the star, and are troubled; they will not follow the grace given to them, because it seems to them to require toil and self-denial; but they cannot altogether shut their eyes, and therefore they are troubled. Some, again, like King Herod, fight against grace, and repay the gentle attraction by which our Lord draws His people towards Him with hatred and ingratitude.

When we think of our Lord as the source of grace—perpetually drawing souls to Him, as He did on this day of His Epiphany, even from His cradle—we cannot but ask ourselves how we ourselves have corresponded with grace. We have seen all the light of this star a great many times, and perhaps for many years. Our Lord is "the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world," and His light has shone upon us since the days of our childhood. Have we been obedient to grace, and at least tried to follow its guidance? Can we venture to reckon ourselves amongst those who, like the wise men, have endeavoured, however humbly, to follow the light given to them, "or have we been, like the dwellers in Jerusalem, too inert, and too much attached to this world to heed the guidance which God has offered to us," or—which God forbid—have we ever been, like Herod, craftily and cruelly fighting against God, and resisting His inspirations?

What better can we do, my dear brethren, than present ourselves in spirit before our Lord on the day of His Epiphany, and promise Him a more perfect correspondence with the graces

which He may think proper to give us? His grace is given to draw us to Himself, and He is "our reward exceeding great."

But the wise men did not present themselves at Bethlehem with their hands empty: "opening their treasures they offered Him gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh." These offerings were not thus offered by mere accident, but were chosen as appropriately representing and acknowledging his dignity, and the character and rights which belonged to Him. The gold represents His royalty: frankincense, the smoke of which ascends before the altar of God, declares that He is not a mere earthly King, but "the King of ages, immortal and invisible, the only God:" whilst the myrrh speaks to us of mortality and suffering. As King and as God, He is far off from us; but the myrrh of His human nature shows how near to us He has come, and this seems to be the attribute in which He most delights.

Look around His dwelling-place, and see how little there is that speaks of royal dignity and divine power, and how much there is of human lowliness and weakness, and of all the privation and suffering which belong to our nature. These gifts, then, represent the three-fold character of our Lord, as God, Man, and King; or, to express them in a verse quoted by St. Jerome:

> To God, made Man, born Israel's King,
> Frankincense, myrrh, and gold they bring.

Let us consider, for a moment, what offering each of these precious gifts represents. Gold is the offering which it becomes us to make to our king. It is the offering of our loyalty: we must be loyal to our heavenly King, as earthly subjects are loyal to the sovereigns of earth, but if that were possible, we should show a loyalty proportioned to the transcendant dignity which belongs to His sceptre. Even earthly loyalty is a beautiful thing. Look at what loyal subjects do to show their affection for their sovereign: what ready and willing obedience! What self-devotion and courage! What reverence and generosity! And all this, it may be, for a man who has very little personally to recommend him—simply because he is a king.

We owe to our King a loyalty a thousand times greater than is due to any earthly monarch. It should be a loyalty in action, in word, and in thought—a loyalty which is always ready to uphold the honour of our King. If we are truly loyal we shall never allow a disloyal thought to come into our minds, or an irreverent word to cross our lips, and we shall show our loyalty by obedience, reverence, and generosity. We must, like good

subjects, make the honour of our King our own honour, and His cause our cause. We must acknowledge this new-born Infant for our God, and with the wise men we must "fall down and adore Him." To Him we must offer our deep reverence and humble adoration, and we must let our prayer ascend "like incense in His sight." To this we must add the offering of myrrh, in token of His humanity, and recognize Him as true man as well as true God. As man, sharing our own nature, He claims from us sympathy and affection, and even from His cradle He calls upon us to "take up the cross and follow Him."

I will conclude with the words of St. Gregory the Great: "By the gifts, therefore, which they presented unto Him the wise men set forth three things concerning Him unto whom they offered them: by the gold that He was King—by the frankincense that He was God—and by the myrrh that He was to die. There are some heretics who believe Him to be God, but confess not His kingly dominion over all things: these offer unto Him frankincense, but refuse Him gold. There are some others who admit that He is King, but deny that He is God: these present unto Him gold, but refuse Him frankincense. There are some other heretics who profess that Christ is both God and King, but not that He took a dying nature: these offer Him gold and frankincense, but not myrrh for the manhood.

"Let us, however, present gold unto the new-born Lord, acknowledging His universal Kingship; let us offer unto Him frankincense, confessing that He who hath been made manifest to us in time, is God before time was; let us give unto Him myrrh, believing that He who cannot suffer as touching His Godhead; was made capable of death as touching the manhood which He shareth with us."

SERMON X.

Christ our Lord.

"See that thou make all things according to the pattern which was shown thee on the mount" (Heb. viii. 5).

WHEN God commanded Moses to make ornaments for the house of God, He gave Him, at the same time, a pattern which was to be imitated in all things. He was not to make things according to his own fancy, and after his own ideas of what was beautiful, but was strictly to conform his work to the model placed before him. In the inner temple of our souls, my dear brethren, it is still more necessary to imitate exactly the example set before us, and "to be made conformable to the image" of the Son of God. St. Peter says: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, did not revile: when He suffered, He threatened not: but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly" (I. St. Peter ii. 21). Our religion consists in following in His footsteps, and making ourselves like to Him in all things. The Catechism, therefore, after dwelling on the Incarnation of our Lord, and fully explaining how His two natures—the Divine and the human nature—are united in one Divine Person, goes on to the mysteries of His life and death.

But first it speaks of Him as our Redeemer: "Why was God the Son made man? God the Son was made man to redeem us from sin and hell, and to teach us the way to heaven." By the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, the human race fell away from God and from the state of justice in which it had been created. By this great catastrophe all men lost the favour of God, and the supernatural end of their creation, and were involved in original sin. One only of the descendants of Adam—the Blessed Mother of God—has escaped from this original curse. She, too, by nature, had inherited it, but, by a special favour of God, through the merits of her Son, she was preserved in her conception from the stain of her race. The Catechism says: "All mankind have contracted the guilt and stain of original sin except the Blessed Virgin, who, through the merits of her Divine Son, was conceived without the least guilt or stain of original sin."

"Original sin," the Catechism tells us, "is that guilt and stain of sin which we inherit from Adam, who was the origin and head of all mankind." With this guilt and stain came a darkness and corruption, and a disposition for evil, which carried men farther and farther away from God, "according to the desires of their heart." "All we, like sheep, have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way" (Is. liii. 6). The Psalmist says: "The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all become unprofitable together, there is none that doth good—no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they acted deceitfully; the poison of asps is under their lips. Destruction and unhappiness in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Ps. xiii. 2). This, my dear brethren, is only too just a picture of the state of the children of men, and it is from this state that the Son of God came to redeem them.

To make atonement for their original offence, and to "redeem," or buy back, those who had transgressed, nothing less than the act of God Incarnate seemed suitable, and, therefore, God the Son, "for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. He was crucified also for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried" *(Nicene Creed)*. He took upon Himself the burden of our sins and sorrows: "Surely He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows; and we have thought Him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed" (Is. liii. 4).

As God, everything that He did had an infinite value. He was always "heard for His reverence," and could make no supplication in vain—but it was not by a little thing that He willed to redeem men. He was not contented without shedding the last drop of blood for us upon the cross, and He willed that this, His Precious Blood, should be the price of our redemption. "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers, but with the Precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled, foreknown, indeed, before the foundation of the world, but manifest in the last times for you" (I. St. Peter i. 18).

The Precious Blood was to be the price of our redemption, and, at the same time, the copious source of every spiritual bless-

ing and good thing. All the graces and virtues of the saints sprung forth from "the Saviour's fountains," by which alone the barren and sterile heart could be fertilized; and we, too, must bring forth fruit from this same Divine source, since "of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace" (St. John i. 16).

Our Lord has been pleased to be known amongst men by two names, each of which has a deep meaning. The Catechism says, "The Holy Name of Jesus means Saviour," and "The name Christ means anointed." Our Lord delighted to be called Jesus, it was the name which best expressed that love for men which brought Him down from heaven. It was the name of suffering, which was given to Him on earth when He first shed His Blood at the Circumcision, and which was written as His title on the cross, when He poured forth the last of it in His Passion. It was the name that best expressed all that He had done for His people and for the salvation of men—the name which told most of His patience and long-suffering, of the perseverance and labour with which He sought after the sheep that were lost. "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (St. Luke i. 31).

A special devotion and respect should always be shown to this Holy Name. It should never be pronounced but with love and reverence, and when It is heard every head should bow. Catholics should never forget the words of the apostle, "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, or on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Philip ii. 10). One of the first lessons which children should learn is that of reverence to the Holy Name; they should begin life with it, as they hope to have it for their protection and comfort in the hour of death. The name of Christ signifies "anointed." It is the name which He assumed to show the office which He had come on earth to perform. In His human nature He was to be the King, Priest, and Prophet of His people, and as such He was anointed, not with oil, as the kings of the earth had been anointed, but with the plenitude of grace and of power: "God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts x. 38), "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally; and you are filled in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colos. ii. 9).

He was anointed as Supreme Lord and Supreme Head of the

Church, "For He must reign until He hath put all His enemies under His feet." He was anointed as the great High Priest of the human race, "always living to make intercession for us." "For it was fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as other priests, to offer sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for those of the people, for this He did once in offering Himself" (Heb. vii. 26).

Our Blessed Lord is our model, as Man, and as High Priest, and as Saviour: we must study Him in His hidden life at Nazareth, as well as in His public ministry, and during His Passion; and, therefore, the Church puts the different scenes of His life constantly before us: "See thou make all things according to the pattern which was shown thee on the mount." If we would copy a model, we are not satisfied with a passing glance or a general view; we take it to pieces, if we may say so, by examining each part by itself, and finding out what is to be learned in each detail. So with our Lord's life: there is not an incident or word from which we may not draw instruction, "for what things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4).

One of the principal ways in which the Catholic Church puts the life of our Lord before her children is by the devotion of the Rosary. This form of prayer is greatly encouraged by the Church for many reasons. It is suitable to all classes of men—clergy and laity, rich and poor—and is in a special way adapted to the use of the unlearned, so that the beads may be called the prayer-book of those who cannot read. It is a devotion, moreover, which is available on many occasions when other forms of prayer cannot be used, and one which leads us to piety by the example and assistance of the Blessed Mother of God. I have only here to consider the course of meditations on the life and death of our Lord which the Rosary puts before us. These meditations are the essential part of the devotion; it is not a mere collection of "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys," but a well-arranged contemplation of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Any one who is accustomed to use the Rosary in the proper way, cannot fail to be well instructed in all the principal parts of our Saviour's life on earth. The Rosary is divided into fifteen "mysteries," or scenes in the life of our Lord; five of which are commonly the devotion for each day.

The "five joyful mysteries" are the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation, the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple. These are said on Mondays and Thurs-

days, and on the Sundays from the beginning of Advent till the beginning of Lent.

The "five sorrowful mysteries" are the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging at the Pillar, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, and the Crucifixion. These are said on Tuesdays and Fridays, and on the Sundays from Septuagesima Sunday till Easter.

The "five glorious mysteries" are the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption, and the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin. These are said on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and on the Sundays from Easter till Advent. It is plain that any one who says the Rosary regularly goes through the whole course of our Lord's life twice in each week, independently of the Sundays. To make this meditation properly, you should think over the whole scene of the mystery, as it is described to us in the Gospel, and try to enter into the feelings which it is calculated to excite. You should then say the "Our Father" and the "Ten Hail Marys," with special reference to the mystery, asking the graces which the scene appears to suggest.

It is true that people cannot always find time to do this at any length or very fully; but still, if you are familiar with the history of our Lord's life, you cannot well fail to have at least some good thoughts appropriate to the scene on which you are dwelling. It is necessary, however, to be well instructed in the history, and to know accurately the incidents of our Lord's life, or else it is impossible to make a meditation on them. The Apostles' Creed gives us a very short summary of our Lord's life, and there seems no better way of illustrating it than by dwelling on some at least of the mysteries of the Rosary.

The third article of the Creed is, "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." The mystery of the Annunciation places the scene of the Incarnation before our eyes. The angel Gabriel descends as a messenger from the Most High God to a lowly virgin in the poor house of Nazareth, and enters with a greeting unheard of amongst men. "And the angel, being come in, said unto her, Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women. Who, having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought within herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary, for thou has found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father: and He

shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said, How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel, answering, said to her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And, therefore, also, the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren, because no word shall be impossible with God. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word" (St. Luke i. 28).

We have here before us an unbounded field for contemplation. We raise our eyes to the Eternal Father, whose messenger the Archangel is. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name." We think of the unfathomable depths of His condescension in thus deigning to ally Himself with our fallen race. We address ourselves to the Blessed Mother of God in the words of the Archangel: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women." "What manner of salutation" is this? How unlike the words of God's angels to mortal men! How great was the angel who was sent down upon earth, and how reverent and tender were His words to this lowly Virgin! St. Bernard says: "The Angel Gabriel was sent from God. I opine that this angel is not one of those lesser ones who are often sent to earth with messages upon one occasion and another. This may be well understood from his name, which signifieth 'the strong man of God,' and because it is especially said that he was sent not by some spirit haply more excellent than he, but by God Himself. . . . . Christ is called, and absolutely is 'the power of God,' . . . . . but the angel is called 'the strong man of God,' either because this title was his right as the herald of the power of God, or because it was his mission to comfort the Virgin, naturally fearful, simple, and shamefaced, lest she should be beside herself with terror at the newness of the miracle, which office he discharged when he said: 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God'" *(Breviary Lesson: Marquis of Bute's translation).*

"And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age." Does it not seem as if this wonder was worked chiefly as the most reverent way of comforting and encouraging her who was to be Mother of God?

We cannot go over this scene in spirit without longing to join with the mighty Archangel in acknowledging the new and unheard of title to reverence bestowed upon the creature whom the Creator has called to such a sublime dignity.

But listen to the words of Mary, and learn how to receive the favours of God: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to Thy word." She is chosen to be the Mother of God, but she is none the less His handmaid: she is not the less dust and ashes in His sight, and the more His goodness exalts her, the more she humbles herself before Him.

The great thought of this mystery is to adore and welcome the Lord who became incarnate, and "did not abhor the Virgin's womb."

"Domus pudici pectoris,
Templum repentè fit Dei."

"The home of a pure heart in a moment is made the temple of God." We say, again and again, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus"; and we should try each time to make these words express more fervently the love and gratitude, the admiration and reverence which we have for our Lord in the mystery of His Incarnation.

Each time we conclude our address with a prayer, and beg our Lady to "pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." We have placed before us the benefits of redemption. The Lord became incarnate because of our miseries, and to bestow great blessings upon men: as we think of these we have not only to be grateful for them, but to ask for help, that we may be worthy of them. Jesus gave these blessings through Mary, and we may well ask her prayers to enable us to use them well, at the present moment, and at the hour of death.

Each "decade" of the Rosary finishes with the *Gloria Patri*, as we are to give glory to God at the end of all our petitions. Everything in the order of nature and of grace is intended, as its last end and aim, to give glory to the Blessed Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Let us, then, give glory for the mystery of the Annunciation. Think of the countless souls who have been redeemed to God by our Lord's Incarnation, and are now praising and glorifying His goodness; think of all the graces that are distributed amongst men for the sake of this God incarnate, and especially of the many blessings which have come to you through it, and join heartily in the universal song of glorification which all creatures send up to the eternal Trinity.

The second joyful mystery is the Visitation, when the Blessed Virgin Mary went to visit her cousin, St. Elizabeth. This feast is kept by the Church on July 2nd. Hear the Scripture account of the mystery: "And the angel departed from her, and Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary

and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she cried out with a loud voice, and said, 'Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord.' And Mary said, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid. For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation unto generation, to them that fear Him. He hath showed might in His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed for ever.' And Mary abode with her about three months, and she returned to her own house" (St. Luke i. 38).

The Lord has come upon earth, and grace goes forth from Him. He will not wait till the appointed time of His birth has arrived. No sooner has the angel departed from her, and God has become incarnate in her womb, than Mary goes forth on her mission, and her voice is the chosen means by which sanctifying grace is conveyed to St. John the Baptist even in his mother's womb.

St. John Chrysostom says: "As soon as our Redeemer was come among us, He went with haste, while as yet He was in His Mother's womb, to visit His friend John. And John in the one womb, becoming conscious of Jesus in the other womb, dashed himself impatiently against the narrow walls of his natural prison, as though crying out, 'I see the very Lord who has given nature her bounds, and I will not wait for the due season of my birth. There is no need for me to linger here till nine months are ended, for He that is eternal is with me. I will break out of my dark cell. I will proclaim my full knowledge of many wonders. I am the sign; I will show that Christ is here. I am the trumpet; let me peal forth the news that the Son of God is come in the flesh' . . . . He saith, as it were, 'Behold, the Deliverer cometh, and am I to remain still bound

to abide here? The word cometh that He may set right all things, and am I still to tarry in prison? I will go forth. I will run before Him and cry aloud to all men, Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world'" *(Brev. Lesson. Fest. Visit.)*.

St. Ambrose, again, says: "We must here consider the greater cometh unto the lesser, Mary unto Elizabeth, Christ to John. . . . Elizabeth was the first to hear the voice of Mary's salutation, but John was the first to receive grace. She heard naturally, but he leaped mystically. She hailed the coming of Mary, he that of the Lord. Mary and Elizabeth spake words full of grace, but Jesus and John worked, and commenced their mystery of godliness from their mothers' beginnings, and so by twin miracles the mothers prophesied from the spirit of their unborn offspring. The babe leaped, and the mother was filled with the Holy Ghost. The mother was not filled before the son, but when the son was filled with the Holy Ghost he filled his mother also" *(Brev. Lesson)*.

Let us now look at a few of the points of consideration which the mystery suggests, that we may dwell on them as we recite the prayers belonging to it. The moment the Holy Spirit had overshadowed her, and the Son of God had become incarnate in her womb, the Blessed Virgin Mary set forth on a mission of charity. She could not rest till she had carried His grace to others, and had begun that work for which He came on earth. "The charity of Christ presseth us" (II. Cor. v. 14). He who has received Christ into his heart ought to be full of zeal to spread the kingdom of God. "Our Father, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." The Spirit of God cannot be selfish or idle within us.

Mary sets forth on a long journey to comfort her cousin, and how is she received? "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is it to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" How perfectly the words of Elizabeth accord with those of the angel! By the instinct of the Holy Spirit, she at once recognized the surpassing dignity which had been bestowed on Mary. St. Elizabeth was advanced in years, and by position entitled to reverence, but the supreme favour of God conferred upon Mary rank above all other creatures, and gave her a right to deference and homage. The Catholic Church joins heartily in this homage, and is never tired of repeating her words: "Blessed art thou amongst women."

And how does Mary receive this? She does not disclaim it or wonder at it; she knows too well how great is the dignity

with which she is invested. "Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid, behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." How wonderful is the prophecy of this unknown maiden, of whom the world thought so little! And how wonderfully has it been fulfilled! Every age has called her blessed, in every language have her praises been uttered and her dignity extolled! "All generations shall call me blessed!" After eighteen centuries, in the Church of God, every tongue throughout the world still calls her blessed.

"He that is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name." In all the dignity given to her, and the honours heaped upon her, she sees but one thing—the greatness and goodness of that God from whom it all proceeds. She accepts the homage paid to her only to offer it up to Him whose handmaid she is. When a trifling distinction is bestowed on us, we exalt ourselves and delight in the honour due to us; but Mary, when she has received the highest of all honours, magnifies God, and pours out, as incense before Him, all the homage which she has received: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

SERMON XI.

The Hidden Life of Jesus.

"Verily Thou art a Hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isaias xlv. 15).

OUR Lord's life is divided into three parts: His hidden life, His public life—that is, His teaching and His passion—and His glorified life, or the miraculous life which He led on earth after the Resurrection. The Five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary treat entirely of His hidden life. This hidden life, my dear brethren, is full of mystery and of instruction, and comprised by far the longest period of His sojourn upon earth. Very little is told us about it in the Holy Scriptures, but we can supply abundantly by our own meditation; and the very fact of the silence, of the humility and retirement in which our Lord so long lived, is, in itself, the most valuable of lessons.

Our Lord's life was hidden in three ways. We can first think of His hidden life in the womb, where, for nine months, He awaited the commencement of the course He was to run. "He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way: His going out is from the end of the heaven" (Ps. xviii. 6). Virtue and grace went forth from Him, even then, for the salvation of men; every day added to the fulness of grace with which His Blessed Mother was endowed, and every day did something for that great spiritual work which He was about to begin. Then comes the hidden life at Bethlehem, His birth in the silence and darkness of night, unknown to men; all the quiet hours with His Blessed Mother, and the mysterious events which occurred in the order of His Providence. Finally, we have His hidden life at Nazareth, the great model of the retirement and humility which belong to the ordinary life of man on earth. Here His life was hidden—not, as before, from the eyes of men, but hidden by the common, every day duties and routine by which it was surrounded. Its events are almost comprised in the words: "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (St. Luke ii. 51).

I shall continue to-day the mysteries of our Lord's hidden life as given in the Rosary; but it will be well, perhaps, to say a word of practical instruction about the devotion of the Rosary. In the first place, every one ought to have a rosary, and, if possible, always carry about with him his "beads." It is difficult

to say the prayers accurately without them, or, at any rate, it is a distraction to be obliged to count in any other way. It is, besides, one of the customs of the Church, and a way of showing faith and devotion; and, to encourage it, a great many indulgences have been granted to those who recite the Rosary on beads which have been duly blessed.

You should begin with the Creed, and make it a very fervent act of faith in all the truths on which you are going to meditate. You then put before your mind the scene of the mystery—for instance, our Lady's house at Nazareth, or the Stable of Bethlehem, or the Garden of Gethsemane; or, at any rate, say to yourself the name of the mystery, and think for a moment or two what it means before you begin the prayers—one "Our Father" and ten "Hail Marys," and one *Gloria Patri* to each mystery. We all say these prayers very often, my dear brethren; but, alas! many say them with very little fruit. If we were to put the examples of our Lord's life before us more carefully, and think seriously what lesson we wanted to learn, and what grace we hoped to get, we should not find our trouble taken in vain.

Let us now consider the greatest of the Joyful Mysteries—the Nativity of our Lord—when the nine months were over, and the Son of God was born upon earth. It is the festival which unites heaven with earth, when the angels of God came on earth to seek their King: "When He bringeth in the First-Begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God adore Him" (Heb. i. 6).

"And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the Governor of Syria. And all went to been rolled, every one to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass that, when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for Him in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds, watching and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear And the angel said to them, 'Fear not; for behold, I bring to you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all

people; for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good-will. And it came to pass, after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger" (St. Luke ii. 1).

Our Lord's coming was the great event in the history of men: He was "the One that was to be sent," and "the Expectation of the nations." The world had been long waiting for Him, and all the changes and great events of history, worked out as they were by the wilfulness of men, had been in, the hands of God, the preparation for His coming. The Roman Emperor little knew that he was taking his part in this preparation; and yet it was his decree that brought about the birth of our Lord as God had designed it.

"Where is He that is born King of the Jews . . . . and assembling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, Herod asked of them where Christ should be born. But they said to Him, in Bethlehem of Juda. For so it is written by the prophet: And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least amongst the Princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth the Captain who shall rule my people Israel" (St. Matt. ii. 2).

And so the decree went forth that the whole world should be enrolled, and Mary and Joseph set out on their long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. We can picture to ourselves how slow and weary was their progress, how much toil and hardship they had to endure, and, at the same time, how the angels of God watched over their footsteps: "In their hands shall they bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. xc. 12). St. Joseph represented the Eternal Father upon earth, and with patient labour carried out the designs of His Providence. The Catechism says: Jesus Christ had no Father on earth: St. Joseph was only His guardian, or foster-father." To him was entrusted God's sacred treasure, and full authority was given to him to execute the high office which had been laid upon Him.

Let us, then, think first of our Father in heaven, whose will is being accomplished, willingly or unwillingly, by all creation: most willingly and lovingly by Mary and Joseph—unknown to

himself by the great Roman Emperor. Let us follow the footsteps of Mary and Joseph as they enter into Bethlehem, and then wander wearily from door to door seeking shelter, "because there was no room for them in the inn." "Blessed art thou amongst women," with the blessing of bearing toil and hardship for Him; blessed in being turned away from door to door, and being forced to take shelter in the poor stable. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The Jews were His own people, His brethren according to the flesh; Bethlehem was the place whence His own family came; it was the seat of His great ancestor, the city of David, and yet the Jews rejected Him, and Bethlehem could not find for Him a roof under which to lay His head.

From door to door went the Blessed Mother of God, and everywhere admittance was refused. Is not this, my dear brethren, only too exact a representation of what was to happen in after ages? Our Lord goes round to His faithful, as He did on that Christmas night to the people of Bethlehem, and would enter into their hearts, and dwell there: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Can we say that we have not again and again refused Him admission, "because there was no room for Him"? "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." As we say these words, and think of Christmas night, we should be full of zeal to prepare a place for Him in our hearts less cold and dreary than the stable at Bethlehem. "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy." The world went on its course, heedless of these good tidings, engaged in its work, or its pleasures, or its repose. "For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, the Almighty Word leaped down from heaven from Thy royal throne" (Wisdom xviii. 14).

The messengers of God sought, not the great people of the earth, but poor shepherds "keeping the night watches over their sheep." The angels had no message for Herod in the capital city of Jerusalem hard by; they had no message for the crowds of distinguished people who were gathered together in Bethlehem, boasting that they were "of the house and family of David," but their good tidings were to be spoken to the poor and the outcast, because One had come "to seek and to save what had perished."

"Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace." We cannot meditate on the Nativity without joining in that which was its great object—to glorify God. As we say the prayers of this mystery, we must make every word a song of praise, to praise the Lord for the wonders of His Incarnation which have now

been displayed. "We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takest away the sins of the world."

We give God thanks for His own great glory, and because He has deigned to make this glory manifest to men. "We have seen His glory, the glory, as it were, of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." But peace to men goes with glory to God. It is the great work of the Incarnation to reconcile these, which by sin had been opposed to each other, and seemed incompatible. "Mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed. Truth is sprung out of the earth, and justice hath looked down from heaven" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11).

"Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Blessed be that gentle and tender fruit of the womb, who came on earth to bring peace to men. He brought it not to the great and the rich, to those who are filled with good things, on whom the sun of prosperity shines, and who are sheltered from the sorrows of life, but to all "men of good-will." He gives it to the poor and the outcast, the captive and the suffering, just as freely as to those who are surrounded by every good thing of earth. It is "the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding" (Philip iv. 7), which this world cannot give, nor earthly riches supply, but must be obtained from Him who is the source of all true peace.

"And this shall be a sign to you: You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." "Let us go to Bethlehem, and let us see this Word that has come to pass." This, my dear brethren, is the word that goes forth to all creation, on this Chrismas night on which we are meditating: "*Venite, venite in Bethlehem, natum videte, regem angelorum, venite adoremus*"—"Come, come to Bethlehem, see born the King of angels; come, let us adore." Let the heavens send forth their hosts of angels to adore their new-born Lord; let the children of men flock in crowds to join with the shepherds in contemplating this wonder—"this Word that has come to pass." Let us also, my brethren, go there in spirit as we recite this mystery; let us claim our share in the joy of His birth, for He has come to be our Saviour. He knows what our needs are, and has come to supply all our wants, "for a child is born to us, and a Son is given to us."

"And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger." How poor is this palace of the

King of Kings! See the rough walls open to the winds of heaven, the rude furniture, the manger, the straw, the ox and the ass, and think that this is all of its treasures that earth offered to its Creator! But though His house is so poor to mortal eyes, yet it is the home of peace and joy which surpass all understanding. We cannot see the angels who hover around, to shroud with their wings their Infant Lord; but there they are, with all their celestial treasures—the angels of God, with their surpassing beauty and grandeur—the seraphim, with their burning hearts. We cannot see the treasures of grace and holiness with which the hearts of Mary and Joseph are filled, but they surpass all the gifts hitherto bestowed upon men, and are infinitely more precious than the gold and jewels of earth; we cannot see the Infinite and Uncreated Wisdom, the fulness of the Godhead which lies hidden in the mortal form of that new-born child, but before His Infinity and Immensity all heaven and earth bow down.

"They found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in the manger." Our Lord would show Himself to His people in the company of that loving Mother whom He had chosen. She had brought Him into the world, and she had to present Him to His people. It is her day of triumph and joy—the day which was to compensate her for all the hardship of the past. "Blessed art thou amongst women." Blessed with a blessing which no other created being can share—the incommunicable privilege of being Mother of God; blessed with an exceeding peace and joy with which the sight of thy Divine Son in His humble cot fills thy heart! Blessed in thy first adoration of thy Son and thy God, blessed in those first acts of tender maternal care which thou didst lavish on Him. Blessed as the chosen means by which salvation is brought to thy people.

Eia ergo advocata nostra—"Come, then, our advocate, and turn upon us thine eyes of mercy, and show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb." The one thing we need is to see and adore our Infant Saviour, to receive Him, as it were, into our arms, to thank Him for the mystery of this night, and to hear what is the message of love which He brings to each. "Last of all, in these days, He hath spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. i. 2). The birth of Christ is a word which the Eternal God speaks to the heart of every man. He has something to say to each one of us, and He speaks to us by His Son, by the voice of that "Word made flesh" who this night comes amongst us.

This is the scene, and these are some of the thoughts, which we must try to have before us as we recite this mystery of the

Rosary, and we can make every word an act of glory to God, of congratulation with His Blessed Mother, and of tender and loving adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ born amongst us.

But even on this night our Lord shows Himself our teacher. He comes down to teach men, and He will not delay. The stable of Bethlehem is the great school of humility and poverty; there, best of all, may we learn to despise this world—so far, at least, as not to set our hearts on its good things; there may we learn, if not to love poverty as the saints did, at least to bear it with cheerfulness. In it we may bear to be forgotten and passed over by men, and hidden in obscurity. Our Lord teaches us, not by words, but by His example. He to whom belongs "the earth and the fulness thereof" is contented with this poor and humble lodging, and is willing to endure all the privations which belong to poverty. Who so poor as the Babe of Bethlehem? Even the poorest amongst us has a better roof to cover him, and a better bed to lie on, than our Infant Saviour chose for Himself.

We are told that St. Francis, the great apostle of holy poverty, had a special devotion to our Lord's Nativity, "by reason of the poverty, cold, and nakedness in which the Divine Infant made His appearance in the stable and crib at Bethlehem. One Christmas night, the saint having sung the Gospel at Mass, preaching to the people on the Nativity, he was not able to satiate the tender affection of his heart, by repeating often, with incredible sweetness, His Holy Name, under the appellation of the Little Babe of Bethlehem. He never spoke or heard mention made of the holy mystery of the Incarnation without feeling the most tender affection and devotion. He was particularly affected with those words, The Word was made flesh" *(Butler's Lives of the Saints).*

I think the story is also told of him, how one day he was seated in the refectory, with all his monks at their poor dinner, which was served to them in the most rigorous poverty, whilst the history of our Lord's Nativity was read out loud to them. When St. Francis heard of the Infant lying in the manger he burst into tears, and cried out, "Shall a sinner such as I am be served in this sumptuous way, when the Lord of Glory lay on straw in the stable at Bethlehem?" and, rising from the table, he sat on the ground to finish his meal.

Our Lord teaches us contented poverty, and He also teaches us to bear slights and humiliations, and not to care too much about the opinions of men. Shall we be so much grieved if the world forgets us, or thinks ill of us, when the same world forgot and despised our Master himself?

But Christmas Night does not conclude the mysteries of our

Lord's birth: it is only the beginning of wonders. He came, not for a passing visit, but to spend with us the long years of His exile. He comes to make His home amongst us, that all Christian virtues may spring up around Him, and scatter their savour throughout the world. He has taught us poverty and the contempt of worldly luxury in His Nativity: He would teach us to bear pain and humiliation at His Circumcision. "And after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (St. Luke ii. 21). He had come to take upon Himself the form of a sinner, and to allow Himself to be reckoned amongst sinners, in order that He might take their iniquities upon Him: "And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith: And with the wicked He was reputed" (St. Mark xv. 28). Circumcision was the mark of a sinner—it was the rite by which sin was to be remitted; and when our Lord submitted to this rite He, as it were, declared Himself a sinner; and the holy name of Jesus, which He assumed at the same time, announced that He had taken upon Himself the sins and the punishment of His people. "Blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus;" may we not spare one "Hail Mary" as a special thanksgiving for this act of humiliation, and for the blood which He first shed on that day?

By His Circumcision, too, He, as it were, places Himself under the law. The law could not bind Him, except in so far as He voluntarily took it upon Himself, and St. Paul declares that he who is circumcised becomes "a debtor to the whole law" (Gal. v. 3). Our Lord, then, took up the yoke freely, that He might teach and encourage those who, by nature, are subject to the law. Oh, my brethren, can we think of this sacred, tender Infant Jesus taking upon Himself the heavy burden, taking it up with pain and humiliation, without at least desiring to imitate Him in His obedience? He undertook in His infancy to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" and shall we murmur if we are called upon to submit to the easy yoke of the Christian law? "Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden is light" (St. Matt. xi. 29). "It is good for a man when he hath borne the yoke from his youth" (Lament. iii. 27). Are not these the lessons which our Blessed Lord would give us in His Circumcision?

Three great feasts are solemnized to complete the celebration of our Lord's Nativity. Christmas and its octave day, the Feast of the Circumcision, have placed their lesson before us,

and the Epiphany alone remains. The Epiphany, or Twelfth Day, is celebrated on January 6, and it means the *manifestation* of our Lord.

"When Jesus, therefore, was born in Bethlehem of Juda in the days of King Herod, behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him. And King Herod, hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And, assembling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him, In Bethlehem of Juda. For so it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least amongst the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, privately calling the wise men, learned diligently of them the time of the star which appeared to them; and, sending them into Bethlehem, said, Go and diligently inquire after the Child, and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I may also come and adore Him. Who, having heard the King, went their way: and behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it came and stood where the Child was. And seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His Mother, and falling down, they adored Him: and, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts—gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having received an answer in sleep, that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country" (St. Matt. ii. 1).

In the Epiphany we have before us the same scene which Christmas night presented to our view; but the spirit of it is quite different, and our Lord teaches us a new lesson. He was come to establish a kingdom upon earth, which, beginning in the stable of Bethlehem, was to spread through the world, and be continued to the end of time in His Catholic Church. He would teach us the duties we owe to Him in this His kingdom —the inward devotion and the outward loyalty which we are bound to pay to Him as our Ruler. He has "the empire on His shoulder," and He is the "Captain" to rule the people of God and, with the wise men, we must offer Him our devotion and loyalty. "Falling down, they adored Him, and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

He teaches us also the conditions of His earthly kingdom. "Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and flee into Egypt,

and be there until I shall tell thee; for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him" (St. Matt. ii. 13). On earth our Lord and His Disciples must always be prepared for persecution and for flight. No matter how prosperous things may appear to be, the storm may be close at hand.

"Wonder not, brethren, if the world hate you" (I. St. John iii. 13). We cannot be true disciples of Christ, if we are not prepared to take our share of the persecution directed against Him —if we will not follow Him in His flight into Egypt. "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death." This should be the spirit of every true subject of our Crucified King.

I will conclude with a passage from St. Leo the Great: "The Word made flesh was pleased to reveal Himself by degrees to those for whom He had come. When Jesus was born, He was manifested, indeed, to the believing, but hidden from His enemies. Already, indeed, the heavens declared the glory of God . . . . and now the guiding star leadeth the wise men to worship Him, that, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, the birth of the true King may be known abroad." The very cruelty of Herod, when he strove to crush at His birth this King, whom he alone feared, was made a blind means to carry out this dispensation of mercy.

"While the tyrant, with horrid guilt, sought to slay the little Child, he did not know, amid an indiscriminate slaughter of innocents, his infamous act served to spead wider abroad the heaven-told news of the birth of our Lord. Thus were these glad tidings loudly proclaimed, both by the novelty of their story and the iniquity of their enemies" *(Brev. Lesson)*.

SERMON XII.

Cana of Galilee.

"Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye" (St. John ii. 5).

THE Gospel of this day, my dear brethren, narrates to us one of the three great events which illustrate the feast we have just celebrated. The word Epiphany means "manifestation," and the title is given to the feast, because on this day our Lord first showed His dignity and power, and the authority He claimed. On Christmas Day He presents Himself to us as "the Child Jesus"—the "Son of Man"—who has come down to be in the midst of His brethren; but, on the Epiphany, He is the Son of God come down to rule His people. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace" (Isaias ix. 6). The Mass on Christmas Day opens with the words: "A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us;" but the Epiphany begins: "Behold, the Lord, the Ruler, is come, and the kingdom is in His hand, and power and empire," and these sufficiently explain the spirit of the two feasts.

Our Lord manifested Himself on the Epiphany by the star which led the wise men from the East to adore Him. "King Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him," at their coming, and the announcement of Him who was born "King of the Jews" was spread abroad even by His enemies. Our Lord's manifestation, however, was completed by two other events which afterwards happened, and these events are commemorated on the same day. To use the Church's words: "This day we keep a holiday in honour of three wonders: this day a star led the wise men to the manger: this day, at the marriage, water was made wine: this day was Christ, for your salvation, pleased to be baptized of John in the Jordan."

Each of these miracles, in its own way, "manifests" the Son of God; the star shows Him as the King of heaven and earth, whom all things worship, and who has power over all hearts; at His Baptism the Holy Spirit solemnly declares His mission amongst men; and the changing of the water into wine—the first of His miracles—announces to us that He is the Ruler, whose word all things obey.

To-day's Gospel describes how our Lord and His Blessed Mother were present at the marriage feast at Cana: they did

not disdain to join in the festivities of their neighbours, and our Lord made this the occasion for working His first miracle. The very fact of our Lord being here is in itself a lesson. His whole life was to be labour and sorrow—He was to be "the man of sorrow"—and yet He did not hesitate to be present at the festivities of men, and to encourage them by His first miracle.

Our Lord is not offended by the enjoyment of men—He is no friend to gloom and sadness. Mirth and festivity, recreation and amusement, however full of life and spirits they may be, are right in themselves, and quite consistent with the presence of our Lord, and, indeed, may be made part of His service, provided, of course, that there is nothing in them contrary to God's commandments.

You find some good people who would repress and put down mirth and enjoyment as if they were sins, and would make the world suppose that religion consists in joylessness and melancholy, and that, if you are not always "serious," you cannot be a good Christian. Nothing can be further from our Lord's spirit than such a temper and demeanour. He "knows what is in man," and He knows that reasonable recreation and amusement are necessary to men, and that without it the labours of this life would be too much for us.

St. Paul says: "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men" (Phil. iv. 4). This, then, is a Christian's part: not to despise and discourage the enjoyments of this world, which belong to our condition here on earth; but to use them in such a way that our Lord may be present in the midst; if we can only keep the thought of His presence with us, our recreations will always be innocent and pleasing before God.

If religious people withdraw themselves from all the amusements of the world, they naturally lose all influence over them; if you never go to any place of public entertainment or party of pleasure you, of course, lose that power which you ought to have and to exercise for good. Whenever good people do this on a large scale all those things which are naturally an attraction to young people are soon found to be immoral and irreligious, and so become a dangerous snare to innocence, instead of harmless amusements.

Our Lord's example, then, shows us that it is a good thing to encourage cheerfulness and festivity at the right time, and in the right spirit. Even if we do not require such things or care about them, we know there are many to whom they are very necessary. We may fancy the Lord joining in the festivities of this wedding, and adding by His presence to the grace and

joy of the occasion, and even condescending to be solicitous for the entertainment of the guests, and from His example we may learn a great lesson of charity.

Try, then, my dear brethren, to keep our Lord with you, not only in the grave and important affairs of life, but in all your amusements and recreations, whether you are alone or in the midst of company. Do not fancy that His presence will be a hindrance to your pleasure; on the contrary, as at this marriage feast, He will add to your joy, and make that innocent and profitable which might otherwise be the occasion of sin. Think of Him as always present, and, even in the midst of the gayest scenes, be ready to lift up your hearts to Him, from whom alone all real joy and peace can come.

The occasion of the festivity is also remarkable. At this marriage feast our Lord did honour to the sacrament of Matrimony, which He was hereafter to establish. In the many years that Jesus lived amongst men, He had no greater object than to set an example to the Christian family. He established His own household amongst men, that the virtues of the holy house of Nazareth might spread themselves abroad throughout the world. With this same object He blessed and dignified the marriage contract, and raised it to the dignity of a sacrament; and, as a sign of this dignity and blessing, He deigned to make a wedding feast the scene of His first miracle. St. Augustine says: "Even setting aside any mystical interpretation, the fact that the Lord was pleased to be asked and to go to a marriage showeth plainly enough that He is the Author and Blesser of marriage. . . . . The Lord being asked, went to the marriage to strengthen the marriage tie, and to shed light on the hidden meaning of matrimony."

The duties of husbands and wives, of fathers and mothers, are the very foundation of all human society; so that all prosperity which is not built up on good Christian family life is an empty show. If the virtues of the holy house, the purity and peace which were its atmosphere, have not their counterpart in Christian families, society must always be in an unsatisfactory condition: and if fathers and mothers do not do their duty by their children, the clergy may toil in vain to make up for their neglect.

Our Lord's presence at the marriage feast is, then, a reminder to all married people of the duties of their state. These duties are among the most serious in the world, and the most important in the sight of God, and involve a constant responsibility. The power which God entrusts to parents over their children is one awful to think of: it is a power which is the very representation

of God's own omnipotence: it is a power over body and soul: it is a power for time and eternity, the extent and effect of which only the day of judgment will enable us to appreciate.

O parents! how can you exercise this awful power if you do not keep the Lord with you! How can you take charge of the little ones of Christ, and of souls purchased by His Precious Blood, if you do not welcome that loving Presence which was, as it were, offered to you when Jesus blessed the marriage feast by making it the occasion of His first miracle. All men should desire to have our Lord with them in their married life: young men and women should desire His presence as they stand at the altar, and should be determined that there shall be nothing in the circumstances of their marriage to make them ashamed of Him: as time goes on they should still desire His presence, to enable them to carry out the obligations they have contracted, to bear the burden of the day and the heats, and so on till the end.

If Christians would only think of our Lord as always present in their households how different the world would be! We should have none of those hard and unkind words, and painful quarrels which now occur. The Lord would bring with Him His own spirit of peace and love: He would teach husbands and wives the lessons of mutual respect and forbearance which are so essential to their state: He would teach those who have to obey to be subject, even as He was subject; and to those who are to rule, He would show how to imitate the gentle authority of Joseph in the holy house of Nazareth.

We now come to a very striking incident in this history, and that is our Lady's part in the first miracle which Jesus worked on earth. "And Jesus also was invited, and His Disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the Mother of Jesus saith to Him, They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her, Woman, what is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come." These words are sometimes taken as if they were a reproachful, and almost rude, answer which our Lord made to His Blessed Mother! This plainly cannot have been so, even if the words, when literally translated, are not such as would now be used. It is clear, at any rate, that our Blessed Lady did not see in them either a rebuke or a refusal; on the contrary, she plainly understood from them that He would grant her petition.

"His Mother saith to the waiters, Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye. Now, there were six water-pots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece. Jesus saith to them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them to the brim. And Jesus saith

to them, Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast, and they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, he knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water."

Now, here we see that Jesus worked His first miracle through Mary's intercession, and it seems as if He would tell us expressly that He worked it solely on account of the request she had made. The occasion was, as we should say, a very trifling one, and our Lord says that His time was "not yet come," and yet, rather than refuse her petition, He worked a great miracle. Can anything give us a higher idea of her power with Him?

We are here encouraged to ask freely through her intereession, and not to be afraid of asking even for little things: however small our wants may be, they are, at any rate, as pressing as that for which our Lord worked this miracle. Still more, in our spiritual necessities: if Jesus granted her prayer in a matter which did not at all concern the object of His earthly mission, can we doubt that He will give more freely still the graces which He came on earth to purchase for men if she asks for them. Again, if our Lord would work a miracle even when His time was not come, we have the strongest possible ground for asking now that His time has come and His work is accomplished.

We may, then, take the events of this Gospel as a proof that we never need be afraid to ask for little things as well as great ones; things for this life as well as for eternity. Our Lord knows all our wants, and sympathizes with them all, and to Him nothing is either great or small, since He is infinite. At the same time, we are led to realize the value of our Lady's intercession, and to see that it is His will to grant many favours through her.

We may also learn from our Lady how we are to ask. We ask, and then are discouraged, and, perhaps, are almost indignant that the Lord does not immediately hear us. She had a much greater right to be heard than we can possibly have, and yet she was not in the least degree either impatient or cast down at what seemed an unfavourable answer, but at once turned to the waiters and said to them: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye."

This is one of the great secrets of prayer: not to be impatient, but to persevere, and, at the same time, to set ourselves diligently to do the will of God as far as we know it. It is not enough to pray, but we must be persevering in prayer. Our Lord gives us a most striking example of the necessity of perseverance, and even importunity, in the parable of the unjust

judge, "who feared not God, nor regarded man." "He spoke a parable to them," St. Luke tells us, "that we ought always to pray, and not to faint;" and he describes the poor widow, who had been injured, going, again and again, to this unjust judge, and wearying him with her complaints, till at last "he said within himself, Although I fear not God, nor regard man, yet, because this widow is troublesome to me, I will avenge her lest continually coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith, and will not God revenge His elect, who cry to Him day and night?" (St. Luke xviii. 1).

In this way the saints obtained all the great graces they received from God; we, on the contrary, too often receive but little grace, because we have so little perseverance. Instead of "crying to Him day and night," we think it a great matter if we ask once or twice; and, if our prayer is not immediately heard, we are discouraged. Our Lord would have us persevere, not because He does not hear us, and know our wants, but because He would have us show that we are quite in earnest in what we ask for, and that we are asking with faith and confidence.

There is a story in the Old Testament which illustrates the importance of perseverance, and may well be quoted here. The prophet Eliseus "was sick of the illness whereof he died, and Joas, King of Israel, went down to him, and wept before him, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the guider thereof. And Eliseus said to him, Bring a bow and arrows. And he said to the King of Israel, Put thy hand upon the bow. And when he had put his hand, Eliseus put his hands over the King's hands, and said, Open the window to the East. And when he had opened it, Eliseus said, Shoot an arrow. And he shot. And Eliseus said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of the deliverance from Syria, and thou shalt strike the Syrians in Aphec till thou consume them. And he said, Take the arrows. And when he had taken them, he said to him, Strike with an arrow upon the ground. And he struck three times, and stood still. And the man of God was angry with him, and said, If thou hadst smitten five, or six, or seven times, thou hadst smitten Syria even to utter destruction; but now three times shalt thou smite it" (IV. Kings xiii. 14). This story beautifully illustrates the use we ought to make of prayer and the Sacraments. They are the weapons of our spiritual warfare, and with them we must strike again and again, and we must not be discouraged if our Lord seems, at first, not to hear us, but must go on with unshaken confidence, and so we shall strike the enemy to utter destruction.

Our Lady sets us the example of this unhesitating confidence.

She is not in the least cast down by the apparent refusal, but takes it for granted that, in some way or other, her prayer will be heard; and proceeds at once to show us another great condition of prayer by saying to the waiters, "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." If we are not prepared to do what our Lord commands we cannot expect that He will hear our prayers. It often happens that we have in our hearts some reserve; there is something in which we are not prepared to do what God asks of us, but are determined to have our own way; or there is something which we will not give up, and so stand out against the inspiration of God's grace. Perhaps we know what the will of God is, and yet we have never set to work in earnest to do it, and so we prevent our Lord from hearing our prayers and granting the favours we ask.

"Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." First, my dear brethren, do the will of God as far as you know it, and then ask with confidence, and our Lord will not refuse you.

Let us now consider the nature of the miracle described to us in this day's Gospel. Our Lord began His miracles by changing the water into wine, and concluded them by changing the bread and wine into His own Body and Blood at His last supper. There is a great resemblance between these two miracles, and yet a great difference. They were both "transubstantiation," or the changing of one substance into another—the greatest work of creative power; but one was the miracle of sight, and the other the miracle of faith.

The things which our Lord did in the sight of men during His mortal life were to be a type of the greater and more mysterious things which He was to do, through all time, in the spiritual order. "Go, and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again" (St. Matt. xi. 4). These miracles were manifest to all men: they could see sickness pass away, and strength come back to palsied limbs; they could see the leper cleansed and restored to human society; they could see and taste the water made wine. Such miracles were intended, not only as a proof of His Divine power and mission for the men of those days, but to the end of the world to give us confidence in His word in those still more wonderful things which He was to work in the souls of men.

Our Lord Himself gives us an example of the connection between the two classes of miracles, and shows how miracles of one order are to be taken as illustrations and confirmations of the other. "Behold, some of the Scribes said within themselves: He blasphemeth. And Jesus, seeing their thoughts, said: Why

do you think evil in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then said He to the man sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house. And he arose and went into his house" (St. Matt. ix. 3). Here our Saviour points to the external miracle as the type and confirmation of the spiritual work which accompanied it. Men could see the healing effect of His word on the body: they could mark the vigour which returned to the limbs, and so they were to realize the cleansing of the soul, and the spiritual healing which had been affected by the same power. When we read, then, of our Lord changing water into wine, and think of the astonishment and rapture with which the guests beheld the work of His power, we must think of the infinitely greater wonder which is constantly accomplished in the midst of us. Every day our Lord works the wonder of which this miracle was the type: He changes the bread and wine which are offered on the altar into the very substance of His own Precious Body and Blood, but still hides Himself under the forms of these, His creatures, that He may be the food of our souls.

He exercises His power, moreover, as He did at Cana, by the hands of men. As the water became wine in the hands of those who filled and poured out from the water jars at the feast, so, in the hands of His priests, does the bread become His Sacred Body, and the wine the "Blood of the New Testament, which was shed for many for the remission of sins." And this Eucharistic Sacrifice is the true marriage feast: it is the banquet at which the Eternal God unites Himself to men, that, "by the mystery of this water and wine, we may be made partakers of His Divinity who vouchsafed to become a partaker of our human nature, Jesus Christ our Lord." It is the banquet of the Great King, the marriage feast of His Son, to which the poor, the blind, and wretched are all invited, that they may be filled with the abundance of God's house, and share in the food of angels: it is the forerunner of that ineffable banquet at which, to use the words of St. Thomas, "Thou, O Eternal Father, with Thy Son and the Holy Spirit, art to Thy saints, true light, full satiety, perpetual rejoicing, complete happiness, and eternal felicity: *Ubi tu cum Filio tuo et Spiritu Sancto, sanctis tuis es lux vera, satietas plena, gaudium sempiternum, jucunditas consummata, et felicitas perfecta.*"

"O sacred banquet in which Christ is received! the memory of His Passion is renewed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of eternal glory is given to us."

On this Sunday the Church keeps the feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, and I cannot conclude without one word in honour of this Sacred Name. It is the name which our Lord loves the best, because it is the title under which He took upon Himself the work of our redemption: it is the name by which He was called when He first shed His Blood, and which was affixed to His cross when He poured forth His last drops for us. It is the name which was so dear to Him when it came from the lips of His loving Mother, and which will never be invoked in vain by mortal man.

It is the name which deserves our supreme reverence, "for there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we may be saved," and it calls for our most tender love, since it constantly speaks to us of the love and suffering of God made man for us. It is the constant ground of our hope, and our protection in all dangers; the name we learned to love in our earliest childhood, and which we hope will be our comfort in our last hours. "Thou, O Lord, art among us, and Thy Name is called upon us, forsake us not" (Jer. xiv. 9).

Let us conclude with St. Bernard's words, which are read by the Church on this day: "It is not idly that the Holy Ghost likeneth the Name of the Bridegroom to oil, when He maketh the Bride say to the Bridegroom, 'Thy name is as oil poured forth.' Oil, indeed, giveth light, meat, and unction. It feedeth fire, it nourisheth flesh, it sootheth pain, it is light, food, and healing. Behold, thus, also, is the name of the Bridegroom. To preach it, is to give light; to think of it, is to feed the soul; to call on it, is to give grace and unction.

"Let us take it point by point. What, thinkest thou, hath made the light of faith so suddenly and so brightly to shine in the whole world, but the preaching of the name of Jesus? Is it not in the light of this name that God hath called us into His marvellous light, even into that light wherewith we, being enlightened and in His light seeing light, St. Paul saith truly of us: 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.' This is the name which the apostle was commanded to bear before Gentiles and Kings and the children of Israel; the name which He bore as a light to enlighten His people, crying everywhere: 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light, let us walk honestly as in the day.' He pointed out to all that candle, set upon a candlestick, preaching in every place Jesus, and Him crucified.

"How did that name shine forth and dazzle every eye that beheld it, when it came like lightning out of the mouth of Peter

to give bodily strength to the feet of the lame man, and to clear the sight of many a blind soul? Cast he not fire when he said: 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk'?

"The name of Jesus is not a light only, but it is meat also. Dost thou ever call it to mind, and remain unstrengthened? Is there anything like it to enrich the soul of him that thinketh of it? What is there like it to restore the fagged senses, to fortify strength, to give birth to good lives and pure affections? The soul is fed on husks, if that whereon it feedeth lack seasoning with this salt. If thou writest, thou hast no meaning for me, if I read not of Jesus there. If thou preach, or dispute, thou hast no meaning for me, if I hear not of Jesus there.

"The mention of Jesus is honey in the mouth, music in the ear, and gladness in the heart. It is healing, too. Is any sorrowful among us? Let the thought of Jesus come into his heart, and spring to his mouth. Behold, when the day of that name beginneth to break, every cloud will flee away, and there will be a great calm. Doth any fall into sin? Doth any draw nigh to a hopeless death? And if he will but call on the life-giving name of Jesus, will he not draw the breath of a new life again?"

SERMON XIII.

The Lord in His Temple.

"And presently the Lord whom you seek, and the angel of the Testament whom you desire, shall come to His Temple" (Mal. iii. 1).

THE Temple of Jerusalem, my dear brethren, was the first house built on earth for the worship of the true God. The great servant of God, King David, had longed to build a house, and it had not been allowed to him. He said to Nathan the Prophet: Dost thou see that I dwell in a house of cedar, and the ark of God is under skins? And Nathan said to David: Go, do all that is in thy heart, for God is with thee. Now, that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying: Go and speak to David, my servant, thus saith the Lord: Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in. For I have not remained in a house from the time that I brought up Israel to this day . . . . and when thou shalt have ended thy days to go to thy fathers, I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom: he shall build me a house, and I will establish his throne for ever" (I. Paral. xvii. 1).

David considered it honour enough for him to prepare building materials, and to get together precious things to ornament the Temple which his son was to build. The Temple was the great work of Solomon's reign: he received a special gift of wisdom to execute it, aud, when it was finished, it was the most glorious and perfect structure that man could execute, and it was meant to be the type of the Christian Church. The Temple was dedicated, and "it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the sanctuary, that a cloud filled the house of the Lord. And the priest could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." And Solomon said: "I stand in the room of David, my father, and sit upon the throne of Israel as the Lord promised: and have built a house to the name of the Lord God of Israel, and have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord, which He made with our fathers when they came out of the land of Egypt" (III. Kings viii. 10).

This glorious Temple was destroyed, and the people were carried into captivity, but God, who had once taken up His abode with His people, would not withdraw his presence from them. A new Temple was built when the Jews returned from

their captivity. "And when the masons laid the foundations of the temple of the Lord, the priests stood in their ornaments with trumpets; and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise God by the hands of David, King of Israel, and praise to the Lord. . . . But many of the priests and the Levites and the chief of the fathers and the ancients that had seen the former temple, when they had the foundation of this temple before their eyes, wept with a loud voice" (I. Esdras iii. 10).

They wept as they thought of the old Temple, because this new building appeared small and mean in comparison with the first, but they did not know that an honour was reserved for it, far greater than had ever been conferred on Solomon's Temple. "For, thus saith the Lord of Hosts: Yet a little while, and I will move the heaven and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will move all nations, and the Desired of all Nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. . . . . Great shall be the glory of this last house, more than of the first, saith the Lord of Hosts, and in this place I will give peace" (Aggeus ii. 7). The first Temple had been called the house of the Lord because His presence was there represented, in a special manner, by the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy-seat on the extended wings of the cherubim. It was, however, only a representation; "to this end only is it made, that Thou mayest regard the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplication, O Lord my God" (II. Paral. vi. 19). Its great excellence was in this, that it was the forerunner of a house in which God was to dwell by a real personal presence; and we now have to consider this mystery in which the Lord first took possession of His Temple on earth.

"And after the days of her Purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord: as it was written in the law of the Lord, that every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord; and to offer sacrifice according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons. And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the Temple. And when His parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he also took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, "Now, Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou

has prepared before the face of all peoples. A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people, Israel.' And His father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning Him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His Mother, Behold this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted, and thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess . . . . and she was a widow until four score and four years, who departed not from the Temple, by fasting and prayers, serving night and day. Now, she, at the same time, coming in, confessed to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all who looked for the redemption of Israel. And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their city Nazareth" (St. Luke ii. 22).

The Church celebrates our Lord's Presentation in the Temple on the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, February, 2., "When the days of her Purification were accomplished"—that is, forty days after the Nativity, counting both Christmas Day and the Purification. It is also called Candlemas Day, because candles are blessed and distributed to the people on that day, and in the Procession and during Mass we hold them in our hands, in memory of our Lord's appearance in His temple as "light to the revelation of the Gentiles."

In the blessing of the candles the Church refers to our Lord's presentation in these terms: "O Everlasting God, who on this day did present Thy only-begotten Son to be received in the arms of holy Simeon in Thy holy temple, we humbly entreat Thy clemency, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to bless, sanctify, and kindle with the light of Thy heavenly benediction these candles, which we, Thy servants, desire to receive and carry lighted in honour of Thy name, that by offering them to Thee, O Lord God, being worthily inflamed with the holy fire of Thy most sweet charity, we may deserve to be presented in the holy temple of Thy glory."

It is the custom for the faithful to take these candles home with them, and to keep them for solemn occasions—as, for example, when the Blessed Sacrament is brought to the house for the Communion of the sick. Candles are used also on another occasion, and that is, when women come to the church, to give thanks after child-birth, for their "churching." It is the ceremony which corresponds to Purification, commanded in the law of Moses. They appear in the porch of the church, carrying a candle, and are led to the altar to make their thanksgiving

and to receive the Church's blessing on themselves and their offspring.

Now, let us consider the lessons given to us in this mystery. Our Lord and His Blessed Mother did not disdain to comply, in the most literal and exact manner, with the law of Moses. She went to the Temple to be purified. He was presented to the Lord as an ordinary first-born son, and was brought back again by two turtle doves, the offering of the poor, which were offered in His stead. Great people amongst men, or those who consider themselves, in some respect or other, to be above their neighbours, often think that they may reasonably claim exemption from the general laws of the Church; but our Lord wanted no such exemption. Throughout His whole life His great characteristic was that of obedience to law.

But this outward formal offering was only a symbol of the great offering really made. Mary with joy offered her Son to Almighty God, the greatest offering ever made by a creature to her Creator. Like Anna, the mother of Samuel, she says: "I have lent Him to the Lord, all the days of His life He shall be lent to the Lord" (I. Kings i 28). She knew how great was the sacrifice, and how great the offering; but she made it as the handmaid of the Lord: she was prepared to receive that sword of grief which was to pierce her heart, even before it was foretold to her. She was to give back to the Lord, to do His Will, and to be obedient unto death, that Son whom He had given to her: and she was to give Him back, without regard to the pain which the offering would cost her mother's heart. Her offering was to be a type of that sacrifice of the highest and tenderest feelings which men are sometimes called upon to make.

But the great work which we have to contemplate is that of our Lord Himself. He appears to be passive; He allows Himself to be offered in the Temple, and to be redeemed by the legal sacrifices; to be placed in Simeon's arms, and to be given back to His Blessed Mother as others will—but all that is done is His work, and it is His action that gives its value to everything that is done. "He was offered, because it was His own will" (Isaias liii. 7). This, His first offering in the Temple by the loving hands of His Mother, was just as much by His own will, as the offering which He was afterwards to make on the cross.

We must think, then, before all things, of that full and loving offering which Jesus in the Temple made of Himself, and of all that He was to do and suffer for man's redemption. In this offering was included all the years of toil which He was to pass on earth, the obscurity of His hidden life, the labours of His

ministry, and the ignominies of His Passion. "The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister;" He came, "not to do His own Will, but the Will of Him who sent Him;" He came "to seek and to save what had perished;" and now, in His childhood, He makes for us a loving oblation of all these labours, "*Quærens me sedisti lassus, redemisti crucem passus, tantus labor non sit cassus*;" "Thou didst sit down wearied seeking me; Thou hast redeemed me by the suffering of Thy cross, let not this labour be in vain." How great was the burden which the Sacred Heart of the Infant Jesus took upon itself when He presented Himself in the Temple as the Redeemer of men!

But Simeon and Anna were sent by God's Providence to receive our Lord, and do Him honour at His presentation. St. Augustine says: "Blessed be the glory of Him that came from heaven to earth! While yet He was borne in His mother's womb, He was saluted by St. John the Baptist; He was presented in the Temple, and recognized by that famous ancient and glorious worthy, the old man Simeon. As soon as He knew Him, he worshipped Him, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation! He lingered in the world to see the birth of Him who made the world. The old man knew the Child, and in that Child became a Child himself, for in the love wherewith he regarded the Father of all, he felt his own years to be but as of yesterday. The old man Simeon bore the new-born Christ, and all the while Christ was the old man's Lord. It had been told him by the Lord that he should not taste of death before he had seen the birth of the Lord's Christ. Now Christ is born, and all the old man's wishes on earth are fulfilled. He that came to a decrepit world came to an old man" (*Brev. Lesson*).

Simeon received Him into his arms with joy. Who can tell the floods of joy and peace and the treasures of grace which filled the heart of that old man as the Infant Jesus was gently placed in his arms? He cannot contain himself, but breaks forth into his song of exultation and praise of the goodness of God which has given to him to see with mortal eyes "the Light to the Revelation of the Gentiles," and the glory of Israel. Can we read this, my dear brethren, without thinking of what should be our feelings when we receive our Lord in the Holy Sacrament? There is our Lord once more in His Temple, allowing Himself to be offered by His priests as once by His Blessed Mother. He appears as unconscious and as passive now as He then did, but is just as much the principal Actor in all that is done, and, as such, is again making His offering in the

Temple. He allows Himself to be given to you at your Communion, as He was to Simeon, and it is your own fault if He is not to you also "a light to the revelation of the Gentiles"—"the light shining in darkness." It is your own fault if you do not receive your share of the graces which filled up the happiness of Simeon so as to leave him no further desire on earth. "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, according to Thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen Thy salvation."

But joy and sorrow, peace and war, must always be mixed together in our Lord's life. Holy Simeon has something to tell us besides of the joy that fills his own heart: "Behold, this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted." It is the misfortune of our race that whatever graces and blessings God gives, the perversity of man is able to turn them into an evil to themselves. This we see in all the inferior gifts of God's providence, and we may see it also in the great work of redemption.

God sent men a Redeemer as the One Thing necessary for them, but they would not receive Him: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." By not receiving Him they rejected Him, and so not only lost the blessings which He had designed for them, but turned them to their own destruction. These words, my dear brethren, ought to make us think of ourselves and of all the blessings which God gives to us; how are we receiving them? We must, at least, take care not to turn blessings into curses, by rejecting the graces God offers to us.

"And thine own soul a sword shall pierce." This prediction is commonly considered as the first of the "Seven Dolours" of our Blessed Lady. It pleased God that she should share in all things with her Divine Son. She had her part in the hardships of His Nativity, His flight into Egypt, and His hidden life; she stood at the foot of His cross, and suffered with Him, and was thus made worthy of her title of Queen of Martyrs. All this was foretold to her from the beginning, so that the sword's point might be continually at her breast. Even on this, the triumphant day when she presented her Son in the Temple, she was to begin to taste the sorrow of losing Him, and to anticipate the agony of the cross.

Once again we find our Lord in His Temple. He takes possession of it, not only as a place of sacrifice, but as a school from whence His word shall go forth to men.

The Fifth Joyful Mystery describes to us the one incident recorded of our Lord during the long interval between His infancy and His public life—that is, "the finding of the Child

Jesus in the Temple." It is recorded in these words: "And the Child grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was in Him. And His parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the Pasch. And when He was twelve years, they going up into Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass that, after three days, they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers. And, seeing Him, they wondered. And His Mother said to Him, Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said to them, How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the word that He spoke unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And His Mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men" (St. Luke ii. 40).

In this Mystery we have our Lord's first independent action, and listen to His first words. His first action was to remain behind in Jerusalem, so as to be found in the midst of the doctors: and His first words were to give a great lesson. "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" His presentation in the Temple was a type of that constant offering up of Himself by the hands of His priests, which He was to perpetuate. And His being found in the midst of the doctors may be taken to represent the permanent teaching authority which he was to establish in His Church, in which He was to be constantly "in the midst of the doctors."

But let us attend more particularly to the lessons which this mystery teaches. We have, first, that lesson which our Lord seems never weary of giving to us—the lesson of obedience to law in the outward duties of religion. Think of Jesus going, year after year, to Jerusalem, not shrinking from the toil and hardship of a long journey, in order to take part in the sacrifices prescribed, so as to "fulfil the days according to the custom of the feast." What a reproach to those who grudge our Lord the little trouble attached to the Easter duties asked of Christians! What our Lord did was but the figure of the more sacred and

sublime rites which He was to institute. He Himself took all that trouble to join in the figurative Paschal Lamb—whereas we are called to participate in the true Pasch which these figures represented.

Our Lord takes this occasion to foreshadow His future teaching in His Church, and yet He does it in a way suitable to the age and position which He has assumed. He is found in the midst of the doctors, not as a teacher, but "hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers." He was Himself the Hidden Wisdom of God, and yet He chose to manifest His wisdom by the docility which befitted His age: He would appear to be learning—He would be submissive to the teaching of others, and by His very docility He would teach. Can we have a better illustration of the lesson contained in St. Paul's words, "Not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety"? We find amongst men a constant desire to make a display of their little attainments, and to exalt knowledge above obedience; and yet, the first lesson which our Lord gives is that of hiding His knowledge, and "hearing and asking questions," although He was Himself the great Teacher of mankind.

This is a great lesson for all men, but especially for young people. Knowledge is an excellent thing, but it brings with it the temptation to self-sufficiency and a contempt for authority, and it is very apt to display itself by a premature assumption of independence and disregard of the opinions of those over us. From our Lord's example we are to learn that true wisdom shows itself in docility and reverence for those appointed to teach.

"Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." There is something very touching in the three days' search which Mary and Joseph made after our Lord. How full of trouble and anxiety were those days!—how full of bodily weariness, as they hurried from place to place, seeking Him everywhere!—how full of mental suffering! Our Lord knew this, and He permitted it, not, we know very well, because He was indifferent to their pain, but He willed that His Blessed Mother should be an example in all kinds of sorrow, and therefore should experience the pain of anxiety.

"Sought Him sorrowing." We can fancy how great was her distress at finding that she had lost Him, and the diligence and perseverance which she showed in that three days' search, and that she knew no rest till she had found Him once more. Is not this a most important example to us? If we find that we have lost our Lord, either by grievous sin, which really separates

us from Him, or by dissipation of mind and coldness of heart, which have hidden Him from our sight, do we "seek Him sorrowing?"—or are we indifferent as to the loss?

But we come to the lesson our Lord Himself teaches us—the one lesson He gives in words during His hidden life. "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" He came to do, not His own will, but the will of the Father, who sent Him, and every action and every word of His life was directed towards this one object. In the stable of Bethlehem and the holy house of Nazareth, in the ordinary duties of His hidden life, in all those years which seemed mere waiting and inactivity, He was doing the will of His Father just as much as when he was completing His work on the cross. "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Everything that He did was "His Father's business;" even in those things which in the eyes of men seemed the least important.

This is the great lesson our Lord gives for daily life. We cannot give much time to our Father's business, if we think that His work is nothing but prayer and the exercises of religion; but if we do *everything* with the intention to please God, and in the manner to please God, then every word and action may be made part of our duty to Him. There is a well-known story, told, I think, of St. Francis de Sales, the Bishop of Geneva, which well illustrates our Lord's lesson. One day the holy Bishop was at recreation with some of his clergy, and they began talking of what they would do if they knew they had to appear before God on that very day. One would recite his Office, another betake himself to this prayer, or that good work, and so forth. The Bishop, however, said: "I should finish this game of chess that I am playing. I began it to please God, and I should go on with it." St. Francis had learned to make everything which he did, work or amusement alike, his Father's business.

The most common-place and laborious work of life, and all the reasonable and innocent recreations by which that work is diversified, however trivial they may appear in themselves, may all be made, in their place, the work of your Heavenly Father, just as well as prayer and the duties of religion. God knows that such things are necessary for us: "Your Father knows that you stand in need of all these things" (St. Matt. vi. 32)—as our Lord Himself tells us—and, therefore, will not disdain to accept them as His work, if only they are done with a good intention to please Him.

"And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." This is the next great lesson of our

Lord's hidden life—the lesson of subjection. Why did our Lord spend so many years in obscurity? For what else except to teach us to bear that subjection and dependence on the will of others which must necessarily be the lot of most men? It is not mere obedience to actual commands that our Lord would teach us, but the spirit of obedience—that is, the willingness to be put under others, when such is the will of God—humility and deference to the opinions of those placed over us, and readiness to give up our own will: all this is implied in "being subject." Let us think of our Lord for all those years "subject" to Mary and Joseph—doing their will and not His own, obeying them in humility and submission—and then we shall not think it so hard if we, too, are sometimes called upon to be subject for His sake.

In meditating on these two Mysteries, then, we have "the Lord in His Temple." He is there offering Himself for man, and giving them the example of self-sacrifice: He is there as a Teacher, and yet, in the very act of teaching, whilst men "were astonished at His wisdom and His answers," He contrives to set an example of docility and reverence for authority.

SERMON XIV.

Jesus Suffering.

"Jesus Christ hath been set forth, crucified among you" (Gal. iii. 1).

EVERY detail of our Lord's life, my dear brethren, was written for our instruction, that we might make Him our model; but the history of His Passion brings before us, at once, all the highest and most perfect teaching of His life. St. Paul says of himself: "I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," as much as to say that Jesus crucified is the one complete and sufficient lesson that Christians have to learn. The Passion of Christ was the book of the saints in which they found solace in trouble and encouragement in danger; from it they learned how to pass through the trials and temptations of life, and how to die.

In the Passion our Lord gives Himself to us entirely. He gives up His body and and His soul, and all the suffering which He endured, to be our solace and refreshment, that, by His suffering, He might overcome ours. This is beautifully expressed in the words of St. Ignatius:

Anima Christi sanctifica me, Corpus Christi salva me, Sanguis Christi inebria me, aqua lateris Christi lava me, passio Christi comforta me.

Soul of my Saviour, sanctify my breast;
Body of Christ, be Thou my saving guest;
Blood of my Saviour, bathe me in Thy tide;
Wash me, ye waters, gushing from His side.

Since our Lord does all this for us in His Passion, the least we can do is to take His sufferings to heart, to meditate upon them, and make them the learning which we value most.

The fourth article of the Creed treats of our Lord's Passion; it is: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried." The Catechism says: "The chief sufferings of Christ were: *First*, His agony and sweat of blood in the garden; *secondly*, His being scourged at the piliar, and crowned with thorns; and, *thirdly*, His carrying His cross, His crucifixion, and His death between two thieves." "These sufferings are called the Passion of Jesus Christ," and "our Saviour suffered to atone for our sins, and to purchase for us eternal life."

"Suffered under Pontius Pilate." Amongst all who were concerned in our Lord's death—Judas the traitor, the Scribes

and Pharisees who delivered Him up through envy, Annas and Caiphas who first condemned Him to die—Pilate is the only one whose name appears in the Creed. His name points to the fulfilment of prophecy. It had been written: "The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till He come that is to be sent, and He shall be the expectation of nations" (Gen. xlix. 10). The long line of rulers—of judges, and Kings, and priests—who had in turn governed the people of God, is now over, and Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, sits and judges in their place. The sceptre has passed away from Juda, and a stranger alone has the power to pass sentence of death. Let us hear the Jews themselves confess it: "Pilate saith to them: Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered: We have no King but Cæsar" (St. John xix. 10). By these words they at once reject Him who is sent to rule over them, and admit that the time has come when He was to be sent.

The Passion of our Lord is described to us in detail in the Five Sorrowful Mysteries, which correspond with the answer of the Catechism above quoted. They are: 1. The Agony in the Garden. 2. The Scourging at the Pillar. 3. The Crowning with Thorns. 4. The Carrying of the Cross. 5. The Crucifixion. Under these heads come all the details of our Lord's sufferings. These mysteries have so often been made the subject of sermons and meditations that I will only mention a few points on which the mind may rest when you recite the Rosary. We say ten "Hail Marys," and repeat ten times the words, "Blessed be the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." It is well to have before our eyes incidents of the Passion, and details of the loving kindness and patient suffering of Jesus, to give a point and weight to these words as we pronounce them.

"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to Mount Olivet. Then Jesus saith to them: All you shall be scandalized in Me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed. But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. And Peter, answering, said to Him: Though all shall be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scandalized. Jesus saith to him: Amen, I say to thee, that in this night, before the cock crow, thou wilt deny Me thrice. Peter saith to Him: Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee. And in like manner said all the Disciples. And Jesus came with them to a country place which is called Gethsemane, and He said to His disciples, Sit you here till I go yonder and pray. And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to grow sorrowful, and to be sad. Then He saith to them: My soul is sorrowful

even unto death, stay you here and watch with Me. And going a little further, He fell upon His face praying, and saying, Oh, My Father, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

"And there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening Him. And being in an agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground." "And He cometh to His Disciples, and findeth them asleep, and He saith to Peter, What, could you not watch one hour with Me? Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh weak. And again He prayed, saying, My Father, if this chalice cannot pass away except I drink it, Thy will be done. And He cometh again and findeth them asleep, for their eyes were heavy. And leaving them, He went away again, and He prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He cometh to His Disciples and saith to them, Sleep on now and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go; behold he is at hand that will betray Me (St. Matt. xxvi. 30; St. Luke xxii. 43).

Such is the history of our Lord's Agony in the garden, as told by the Evangelists. It is the beginning of the Passion, and, as we may say, the connecting link between the Holy Eucharist and Mount Calvary. We cannot but remember that He went out into the garden as He rose from the last supper; that He had just fulfilled the ancient Paschal rite, and instituted the sacrifice of the New Law; and that the Apostles followed Him fresh from their first Communion, with His words still lingering in their ears. In the garden, too, He opens to us His heart, and shows us all the pain and bitterness with which His soul is filled. His was not a mere outward suffering, but one which took possession of His whole human nature, as with a torrent of bitterness. Once again, when the end draws nigh, He calls our attention to the suffering of His inward heart by the words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou abandoned Me?" At all other times of His Passion He displays to us only that calm, gentle patience which is to be the model for Christians in times of trial.

Let us follow in spirit with the Disciples, and see our Lord beginning His Passion in that dark, silent Garden of Olives, far removed from the haunts of men. How different from the scene in which it was to close on Mount Calvary, in the midst of a multitude, watched by His enemies, and insulted by the crowd! As you say the "Our Father" think of the perfect sacrifice which Jesus made of Himself for the glory of God

—the complete offering up of His will to the will of His Eternal Father, and join with Him in the petition, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

You turn, then, to Blessed Mary, and with her contemplate the mental sufferings of her Divine Son, which she could understand, and in which she sympathized more than any other created being. She was not then to behold our Lord in the Garden of Olives, but she was with Him in spirit, as we wish to be, and she laid up His words in her heart, as we desire to do, and we say to her again and again, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." Blessed is He for that bitter sorrow which He allowed thus to take possession of Him, by which He would take away from us the bitterness of mental anguish. He does not disdain our society in the midst of His mortal conflict, but calls upon us to watch with Him. "Stay you here and watch with Me." Blessed is He who thus asks us to take part in His sorrow, and promises to share ours, if only we allow Him to do so.

"Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." "Who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard for His reverence" (Heb. v. 7). Are we not to bless Him for the strong cry and bitter tears which He offered for us in the garden—tears for our sins and the dreadful punishment of sin—tears which were to "become to all that obey Him the cause of eternal salvation"?

Next come His words of gentle reproach—the words which He spoke to His Apostles, but which each one of us may feel as said to himself, since he has deserved them a thousand times. "Could you not watch with Me for one hour?" Our Lord watched for us and prayed for us. We read of Him spending the night in prayer, and on this last night of His mortal life, being in an agony, "He prayed the longer," and His prayer was all for us and for our salvation: and yet how often do we grudge Him even a few minutes! In His divine charity He makes excuses for us, as He did for His Apostles. "The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak;" but can we make any excuse for ourselves?

And now the end of His agony approaches. He has watched and prayed, and now the moment for action has come. "Arise, let us go; behold, he is at hand that will betray Me," and He goes forth to meet the traitor. He did not need to prepare Himself for the time of trial, but He knew that we did, and He shows us how we are to make ready for the hour of danger and

temptation. If, after His blessed example, we will humble ourselves before God, and pray with Him, we, too, shall be able to rise from our weakness, and go forth bravely to meet our trials, as He did.

"Friend, wherefore art thou come?" These are the words with which He addresses the traitor. May we not sometimes fancy these words addressed to ourselves? If we enter carelessly into His presence—as people do when they kneel down to pray in a thoughtless and dissipated manner, or enter into the church without seeming to give any heed of His presence—does it not seem as if He said to us as He did to Judas: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Is it, indeed, to adore and worship and love? Does it not look sometimes as if we rather came to betray Him?

"And Jesus said to the chief priests and magistrates of the temple, and the ancients that were come unto Him, 'Are you come out, as it were, against a thief, with swords and clubs? When I was daily with you in the temple, you did not stretch forth your hands against Me; but this is your hour and the power of darkness. And apprehending Him, they led Him to the high priest's house" (St. Luke xxii. 52). We can conclude the consideration of our Lord's agony by thinking of the pain and humiliation of that night when Jesus was dragged through the streets of Jerusalem by armed men, amidst the shouts of the people. May we not say again and again, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus"? May we not well try, as we think of this night, to comfort our Blessed Mother by praising and loving Him who has suffered so much for us?

In the scourging at the pillar we seem to have put before us in a special manner the personal degradation and insult which our Lord chose to bear, as the fitting punishment for sin. He would show us that sin is a foul blot by which the immortal soul is defiled and dishonoured—that is, a stain which remains upon us until it is washed away by sorrow and suffering. Therefore He allowed the dignity of His sacred Person to be outraged by cruel blows, and still more cruel insults. "And when He had said these things, one of the servants gave Jesus a blow, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?" "And the men that held Him mocked Him and struck Him. And they blindfolded Him, and smote His face. And they asked Him, saying, Prophesy who it is that struck Thee? And blaspheming, many other things they said against Him." "And some began to spit on Him, and cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophesy, and the servants struck Him with the palms of their hands" (St. John xviii. 22; St. Luke xxii. 63; St. Mark xiv. 65).

"It is your hour and the power of darkness." Our Lord gave Himself to the will of the rabble around, and allowed Himself to be struck in the face, and even publicly, in the presence of the high priest, to be struck by a servant. But this was not enough; He must be formally sentenced to the lash, and this even when His innocence is manifest. Pilate says: "Behold, I, having examined Him before you, find no cause in this man in these things wherein you accuse Him. No, nor Herod neither, for I sent you to Him, and behold nothing worthy of death is done to Him. I will chastize Him, therefore, and release Him" (St. Luke xxiii. 14).

"I find no cause in those things wherein you accuse Him." Where, then, is the cause for the cruel scourging which He is to endure? We must look for it in the degradation of our sins which He has taken on Himself. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." "Who, His own self, bore our sins in His body upon the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice: by whose stripes you were healed" (Isaias liii. 5; I. St. Peter ii. 24). As you meditate on this mystery, then, my dear brethren, follow our Lord in spirit to the hall of the scourging, and see Him fast bound to the pillar, and count the blows which fall thick on His Sacred Body: learn the hatefulness of the sins of men, and think of the part which your sins have in the cruel insult and torture He is suffering—and still more, let your heart warm to Him who was thus "wounded for your iniquities and bruised for your sins." Think how the scourges must have fallen on the heart of Mary, and say to her, "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

If the scourging brings before us the personal humiliation which our Lord suffered, His crowning with thorns displays to us His utter rejection by His own people, and the mockery which was heaped upon Him. He was a King, indeed! then they would make Him a King and crown Him. "Then the soldiers of the governor, taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together unto Him the whole band, and stripping Him, they put a scarlet cloak about Him, and, platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And, bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews. And spitting upon Him, they took the reed and struck His head" (St. Matt. xxvii. 27). "Pilate, therefore, went forth again: Behold, I bring Him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in Him (Jesus therefore came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment), and he saith to them: Behold the Man! When the chief priests, therefore, and

the servants had seen Him, they cried out, saying: Crucify Him, crucify Him" (St. John xix. 4).

St. Bernard says: "Let sinners gaze upon Him in His crown of sorrow, the crown of thorns, and let the pricks thereof enter into themselves. Let the daughters of Zion, the souls that love Him, gaze upon Him in His crown of mercy and follow in His steps. The wicked shall gaze upon Him in His crown of righteousness, and they shall perish. The saints shall gaze upon Him in His crown of glory, and they shall be blessed for ever. Others also that have followed Him shall be crowned after Him by that earnest working by the help of His grace" *(Brev. Lesson)*.

"Behold the Man!" Our Lord was presented to His people and rejected by them. He appeared to them in the guise of humility and sorrow, and they scorned Him. If this same Lord had come before them as a mighty King, with His hands full of gifts, how differently would they have received Him! If this crown of thorns had been changed for His crown of glory, and the purple garment had become the triumphal robe of a conqueror, the world would have bowed before Him; but men could not endure Him in His crown of thorns.

"The Lord hath said to me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of me and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces as a potter's vessel" (Ps. ii. 7). That reed which our Lord held in His hand, which seemed to men the sign of His weakness, was in reality more powerful than all the sceptres of Kings; but the world knew Him not, and rejected and scorned Him.

As it did then it does now, and we, my dear brethren, who live in the midst of the world, are in danger of being led away by its judgment, and despising the simplicity and poverty of the cross. In this mystery of our Lord's crowning with thorns, let us accept Him as our King—as the King whose kingdom is not of this world—as the King of humility and poverty, whose weakness is mightier than all the powers of earth, and whose poverty is richer than all the wealth of earthly kings. Let us, then, look at our Lord, as He "comes forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe;" look at the sacred head, atoning, by its countless wounds, for the haughtiness and vanity of man, and take to heart the lesson of humility it teaches us. Let us "look on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of Faith, who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. xii. 2).

We must choose Him as our King, crowned with thorns, and so we shall be worthy to follow Him in that day when the thorns shall be turned into glory, and "the Lord of Hosts shall be a crown of glory and a garland of joy to his people" (Isaias xxviii. 5).

The "carrying of the cross" represents to us the weariness of the Passion. In the scourging Jesus is outraged; in the crowning with thorns He is rejected and scorned; but, carrying His cross, He is patient under a cruel and heavy burden. As you meditate on it, think, my dear brethren, of the unutterable weariness and exhaustion which our Lord suffered in His Passion. Jesus had spent the long night before His crucifixion, the first part, in mental anguish, and afterwards hurried backwards and forwards through the streets of Jerusalem, from one tribunal to another.

"Then the band and the tribune and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him, and they led Him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiphas, who was the high priest of that year. Now, Caiphas was he who had given the counsel to the Jews—that it was expedient that one man should die for the people . . . . and Annas sent Him bound to Caiphas, the high priest. . . . . Then they led Jesus from Caiphas to the governor's hall. And it was morning; and they went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the Pasch" (St. John xviii. 13–28).

To Annas, to Caiphas, to Herod, and to Pilate—how weary and exhausted was this Blessed Lord! Think of the blood which He had poured out, and the toil and pain He had gone through, when, at last, He stood, faint and exhausted, before Pilate's judgment-seat, to receive sentence. "Pilate saith to them, What shall I do, then, with Jesus, who is called the Christ? They say all, Let Him be crucified. The governor saith to them, What evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified. And Pilate, seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, taking water, washed his hands before the people, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just man; look you to it. And the whole people, answering, said, His blood be upon us and upon our children. Then he released to them Barabbas, and, having scourged Jesus, delivered Him unto them to be crucified" (St. Matt. xxvii. 22).

And now that heavy cross on which He was to suffer was brought out and laid upon Him. He had already taken up the burden of the sins of men, and He lovingly and patiently accepted the heavy cross, which was its external emblem, "and bearing His own cross," St. John tells us, "He went forth to that

place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew, Golgotha" (St. John xix. 17). We have all, my dear brethren, meditated frequently on this last painful journey which our Lord undertook for us—on His three falls under the weight of His cross, and all the other incidents that occurred. Does it not place before our eyes the most perfect model of patient perseverance that man can have? We see our Lord struggling on, in spite of pain and weariness, in spite of exhaustion and loss of blood, till His course on earth is ended. Is not this to give us courage to fight bravely against the weariness which besets us in this mortal life? "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Our Lord bore this heavy cross that He might call upon us to take courage, and be patient, however severe the burden laid upon us might be.

And now we come to the last of these Sorrowful Mysteries—the Crucifixion. In this we have before us the complete self-sacrifice of the Passion, "He was offered because He Himself willed it" and he reserves nothing for Himself. He offers His limbs to be nailed to the cross. "They have dug my hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones . . . . they parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots" (Ps. xxi. 17). He gives His body to be raised up in the sight of His people: "I have spread forth my hands all the day long to an unbelieving people." He gives His side to be pierced with a lance, and His Precious Blood to be poured forth for the salvation of men. Could any sacrifice be more complete? "What is there more that I ought to do to my vineyard that I have not done?" (Isaias v. 4).

"And they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads, and saying: Vah, Thou that destroyest the Temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save Thine own self; if Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. . . . Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour; and about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lamma sabacathani—that is, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? And some that stood there and heard, said: This Man calleth Elias. And immediately one of them, running, took a sponge and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. And the others said: Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to deliver Him. And Jesus, again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in two, from the top even to the bottom, and the earth quaked and rocks were rent: and there stood by the cross of

Jesus His Mother, and His Mother's sister, and Mary Magdalen." It is with these, my dear brethren, that we must take our stand. Let us ponder on the details of our Lord's three hours, in sympathy with the tender loving heart of Mary, and learn that lesson of self-sacrifice which Jesus is teaching us from His cross. "It is consummated." Our Lord has done everything that infinite love and mercy could do for us, and what have we done for Him?

Sancta Mater istud agas
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.
Holy Mother! pierce me through,
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified.

SERMON XV.

The Passion.

"I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I. Cor. ii. 2).

We are now entering upon the sacred season of the Passion. On this Sunday, my dear brethren, the Church begins her solemn mourning for her crucified Head—she puts off her splendid attire, and clothes herself in purple, and, in sign of mourning, veils all the statues and images around her walls, and even the crucifix itself. This is the season during which we are specially to meditate on the sufferings of Christ, and, in loving contemplation, to join our hearts to those of all His faithful followers. It is not as if the Passion were ever to be out of our thoughts—at all times and seasons Jesus crucified ought to be with us. If we triumph and rejoice at His resurrection, or are full of tenderness at His nativity, we must still keep His cross before us, so as to rejoice with Jesus crucified as well as mourn with Him, and thus try with the Apostle, to know nothing but Jesus, and Him crucified.

The essential characteristic of a good Christian is to be a lover of the cross, and a follower of Jesus crucified. The cross, from the beginning, had been "unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness, but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I. Cor. i. 23). As it was then, it is now; the mystery of Christ crucified is a scandal and a shock to the world. There are numbers of respectable, good people, who think themselves sincere Christians, who, nevertheless, keep far away from the cross of Christ; they may speak of it in general terms, but they have no desire to come near and meditate upon our Lord's sufferings. They do not wish to stand at the foot of the cross with the faithful band who were stationed there, but rather join with the world in taking scandal at all that our Lord did and suffered, and like to hear as little as possible about it. Let it not be so with us, my dear brethren, but let us be sure that there is no true holiness or peace except at the foot of the cross, and that, if "you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you also be of the consolation" (II. Cor. i. 7).

Our Lord has made His Passion the special object of medi-

tation for His followers. His whole life was to be a model, but all the lessons of His life were renewed, and, as it were, crowded together into the time of His Passion, to be the one great lesson which Christians should learn. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not, but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly; who, in His own self, bore our sins in His body upon the tree; that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice; by whose stripes you were healed" (I. St. Peter ii. 21).

Our Lord's Passion is a pattern, and how are we to copy it? It is the pattern of all virtue, and for all mankind; it is the highest standard of perfection which the saints can find to imitate, and it is, at the same time, the first lesson for beginners, from which alone they can learn the spirit of Jesus. How, then, is it to be learned? Not by a mere hasty glance. How do men learn from the copies set before them of human things? They do not look and pass by—they make their model a careful study, and give their best attention to every part. The painter studies every line, and dwells upon every shade, of the copy before him, and he sees in his model a thousand things which a passing observer would never notice; and so he catches something of the spirit of that which he has been copying. So should it be with us, my dear brethren; we must not be content with a hasty glance, but pause to go deeply into everything that happened in the Passion, that we may sympathize with our Lord, and learn the lessons He is teaching.

This is precisely what the Catholic Church urges upon us at all times; and particularly during Lent. We have had proposed to us, every week, some special part of the Passion; the prayer in the garden, the crown of thorns, the lance and nails, the five wounds, the Precious Blood—all these are put before us separately and specially, that we may learn to copy our Lord in His Passion, not only in general, but in detail.

But there are two ways of studying the Passion: friends and enemies both looked on whilst Jesus was suffering. "And they watched Him"—the cruel mob of soldiers around His cross watched Him just as the chosen few at the foot of the cross did; but, oh, how great was the difference! Some of that crowd looked on with envy, malice, and hatred; many more, perhaps, were hardened and indifferent, and most of those who looked on were very far from understanding the depth of the mysteries they beheld, so that "seeing, they did not see, and hearing, they did not understand." So it is now; there are

vast numbers of people who look on, and speak of the Passion, but have very little love for Jesus crucified in their hearts, to whom the cross is a stumbling-block and foolishness. Around the cross the company which was once present is still to be found. We may still find the representatives of the fierce Jews, uttering frantic blasphemies against God and His Christ, and, with all their might, denying and rejecting their Saviour. There are still many, like the hardened Roman soldiers and executioners, who look on indifferently, "caring for none of these things." They are full of themselves and their affairs, and have no thought or feeling to give to our Lord on His cross. Many, too, can be found, like the fickle and thoughtless crowd, swayed by every idle word, just like the populace, who were ready one day to cry, "Hosannah to the Son of David," and were equally ready a few days later to shout, "Away with Him, crucify Him!"

Our business, then, my dear brethren, at this holy season, is to take part in the Passion of our Lord in an earnest, loving spirit; we must meditate upon His sufferings with loving eyes and compassionate hearts. But we must remember also to look at His Passion with the eyes of faith. It is not a mere scene of human suffering which we are to contemplate—it is the Son of God engaged, for our sakes, in a great work of love and suffering, in which we are sharers.

We must not consider ourselves as mere spectators, as if we were listening to an old history long since passed and gone. Jesus is the "Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," and His Passion is ever new; it is repeated before the eyes of every age, and men of all generations are called upon to take a part. Whenever the year brings round the commemoration of our Lord's Passion it is as if we were solemnly invited to take a share in the great work which the Son of God came to do amongst men; we are called on to take our part, one side or the other, with heaven or hell—with Him or His enemies.

We must take care, then, not to take a mere human view of all the things presented before our eyes, but see in everything the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts ii. 23). "He was offered up because He Himself willed it," and every detail of His Passion, every ingredient of His bitter chalice, was His own will. Everything that He did, too, was of infinite value—every word that He said carried with it an immense weight—every suffering was of infinite price, having a value arising from the infinite dignity of the Divine Person who condescended to suffer.

We must, then, follow our Lord in spirit during these days

through all the scenes of His Passion—from His solemn entering into Jerusalem until all "was consummated" on the cross—and in every part we shall find something to speak to our imaginations and our feelings, and also something that we may use as an example for ourselves.

Let us take some scenes for special consideration to-day; and nothing will be more appropriate to begin with than the treason of Judas, by which our Lord was delivered into the hands of His enemies. Our Lord chose to begin His Passion alone. It was to be His own work, and He would not wait for the hour in which He was to be delivered into the hands of men. The solitary agony which Jesus suffered in the garden, when His "soul was sorrowful even unto death," was the first and bitterest part of His Passion; but its formal commencement was when He said, "Arise, let us go: behold, he is at hand that will betray Me," and, "as He yet spoke, behold Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and ancients of the people. And he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss that is He: hold Him fast. And forthwith coming to Jesus, he said, Hail, Rabbi, and he kissed Him. And Jesus said to him, Friend, whereto art thou come? Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and held Him" (St. Matt. xxvi. 46).

Let us consider well this scene. The Garden of Olives, the place well known to the Disciples, where our Lord had been accustomed to lead them to pray, as into a sanctuary, is invaded by an angry and excited mob; its peaceful silence broken by the clash of arms and the shouting of rough voices, whilst, in the torch-light, Judas is seen to come forth, with his smooth tongue and hypocritical smile, "Hail Rabbi, and he kissed Him!" Let us look at Him well, my dear brethren; it may be that we shall see Him again, or that we have seen Him more than once; or, at any rate, that we have seen His part many times enacted. "Friend, wherefore art thou come?"

Well may Judas have hung his head with shame at these words. The rough soldiers behind him were only too good an answer to our Lord's question, "Wherefore art thou come?" Does not Jesus ask this of us also? With what dispositions do we take part in His passion? Are we conscious of no hidden treason? Can we look our Lord in the face, and answer for the fidelity and love of our hearts? Do our actions show this fidelity?

It is one of the most distressing considerations in the Passion of our Lord that so large a part of it was brought about by His

friends. Those who ought to have been His faithful friends had the greatest and most effective share in His sufferings. "If My enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne with it; and if he that hated Me had spoken great things against Me, I would, perhaps, have hidden Myself from him; but thou, a man of one mind, My guide, and My familiar!" (Ps. liv. 13). These are the prophetical words which our Lord addresses to Judas and all like him.

The Passion was not brought about by strangers, but by His own people. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The leaders against Him were not ordinary people; they were the priests of God, solemnly dedicated to His service, on whose heads the sacred unction had descended. In the same way, the immediate cause of the Passion was the treason of His own Disciple—of one whom He had chosen amongst men to be His Apostle, and a priest of the New Law. Without His instrumentality the Passion could not have begun. All the avowed enemies of Jesus could have done nothing against Him, but for the part taken by His own friends. This was what our Lord willed to be the bitterest part of His chalice—that all He was suffering, all the ignominy and cruelty that were heaped upon Him, had their beginning in the actions of His own friends.

Those who ought to have been His friends had the greatest share in the Passion, because what they did was guided by greater knowledge and by greater malignity. The Jews and the chief priests, from their position and knowledge, had the power to offend much more bitterly than mere heathens could have done; and, in the same way, Judas was able to bring to his crime a degree of intensity which was far beyond even the hatred of the Jews.

Consider how many things went to make up the enormity of the sin of Judas. He sinned against light, for he had long been in familiar acquaintance with our Lord; he sinned against express warnings—our Lord had distinctly prophesied to him what was to happen; he sinned with extreme deliberation, and for the meanest motive; and, to crown all, his sin contained in itself the most hardened ingratitude.

It is so in our own day also. A great part of the worst sins committed against our Lord and His Sacraments, and His Holy Church upon earth, are committed by ourselves—at least, it is in a great degree by our fault that they are committed. "Why do the Gentiles rage and people devise vain things?" The powers of the world can never do much against our Lord, unless some Judas is found to betray Him, or some one in

weakness to deny Him, as Peter did? Then it is that the world is armed by our faults and follies and the Passion of Christ begins.

And the sins that we ourselves commit, are they not the very worst of the injuries offered to our Lord? They generally contain that element of calm deliberation which was the peculiarity of the sin of Judas. The sins of Christians are, in a special manner, sins against light and grace, and therefore, in themselves, constitute the worst offences committed against God; and the sins of Christians, moreover, "give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (II. Kings xii. 14).

Let us now look at the streets of Jerusalem on that night, as they might have appeared to the angel of God. There is the mob, with lanterns and torches, with swords and clubs, surrounding the gentle figure of Jesus, and urging Him on through the streets, from one tribunal to another. No time is to be lost, no hour is too late, no season too sacred—He must at once be carried before the tribunal of the Jews, and must be condemned. He goes before Annas and Caiphas, and each, in turn, tries what he can do to find evidence to condemn Him. "And the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put Him to death; and they found not, though many false witnesses had come in" (St. Matt. xxvi. 59).

All the evidence that they could bring against Him was insufficient. "And the High Priest said to Him, I adjure thee by the Living God, that thou tell me if thou be the Christ the Son of God. Jesus said to him, Thou hast said it; nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (St. Matt. xxvi. 63).

Is not this a wonderful sight, my dear brethren? How must the angels have looked on in amazement? God standing to be judged by his own creatures, ready to receive a sentence of condemnation from their lips! The arrogance with which men set themselves to judge!—the patience with which our Lord suffers it; "It is your hour and the power of darkness." So it is even in the dealings of men with God: they are ever ready to sit in judgment upon their Creator, to find fault with His ways and His providence, whilst he bears with their short-lived impatience, and judges not before the time.

How ignominious a thing for our Lord to be brought before this tribunal! And yet He suffered it; He desired, for our sakes, to give testimony to the truth, that we might be ready in due time to be witnesses for Him. He knew how hard it would be for us to bear the false accusations, the unjust judgments, the

unkind, bitter words of men, and therefore He bore them for us. It was to be part of the trial of Christians in all times, as it is in our own time, and amongst ourselves, to be spoken of as traitors and malefactors, as seducers and deceivers; and this not only by the crowd, but very often by those whom we are naturally inclined to respect.

Our Lord, therefore, "gave testimony under Pontius Pilate, a good confession," and allowed Himself to be condemned in this ignominious manner by the greatest and most revered tribunal of His own country.

But let us listen to His condemnation, that we may learn the value of this world's judgments. "Then the High Priest rent his garments, saying, He hath blasphemed, what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy. What think you? But they answering, said, He is guilty of death. Then they did spit in His face, and buffeted Him, and others struck His face with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck thee?" (St. Matt. xxvi. 65).

Let us gaze upon this scene, my dear brethren. If we do but look upon Jesus as a friend, as one who has loved us, we cannot but be filled with horror at the pain and ignominy heaped upon Him. We cannot but feel for Him as He hears that cruel sentence from the mouth of the chief priest of His people, "Thou art guilty of death," and at the terrible foretaste of death which is given by the rough and cruel treatment of the crowd which surrounds Him. But if we look up higher, by the light of faith, and think what a terrible blasphemy even the least of those words and actions was—that they were falling not merely on the venerable and sacred head of the most pure and holy of the human race, but on One who was true God as well as true man —who "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phil. ii. 6).

And what shall we learn from the example of our Lord? Our first lesson, surely, is not to care too much for the opinions and judgments of men. How often do we allow ourselves to be carried away by the hasty and foolish cries of men?—how often, it may be, have we followed them in condemning the Lord of Glory? When good and evil have been brought before us for judgment, have we not often sided with the wrong, because we were too much swayed by the feelings of men?

Our Lord would teach us that our first duty is, on proper occasions, to be able to stand firm against the judgments of this world, and imitate the confession which He made for us. We must imitate Him in His silence and in His gentleness, and

also in that firmness with which He bore unmoved the opinions of men, whether they came in the shape of a solemn judgment or with all the noise and violence of an excited crowd.

There is one more stage of our Lord's Passion which I should like to put before you, my dear brethren, and this is, in some aspects, the most marvellous of all—it is the scourging of our Lord at the pillar. It had been decreed in the eternal counsels of God that Jesus should be obedient unto death, and that His Precious Blood should be poured out as the price of our redemption. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, but with the Precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled" (I. St. Peter i. 19). "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22).

We can understand, therefore, in a manner why our Lord chose to die upon the cross. But why did He please to submit to the gratuitous insult and outrage of His scourging? It was, in itself, almost the greatest degradation which could be inflicted upon man—it was the punishment of a slave—which was considered fit for only the meanest of the human race, so that even St. Paul claimed exemption from it because he was a Roman citizen; it was, in our Lord's case, particularly ignominious from the way in which it was ordered. "I will chastise Him, therefore, and let Him go" (St. Luke xxiii. 22). Pilate undertakes to correct our Lord, to amend His conduct by this chastisement; and does this by way of gratifying the infuriated rabble. It is difficult to see how any greater affront could be offered to the Son of God than by this hypocritical pretence.

The scourging, too, as carried out, was at once the greatest humiliation and the most grievous torment that can be conceived. Jesus was dragged into the hall of the Pretorium, and there stripped of His garments in the midst of all His enemies; His hands fast bound to the pillar; His virginal flesh torn by the scourges, and His Precious Blood scattered around, on the walls, on the scourges, on the ground, and trodden under foot by the meanest of men. Is it possible for any humiliation to go farther? Who can conceive the agony of shame, grief, and pain which the Sacred Heart of Jesus suffered at this ignominious punishment? And yet this shame was precisely what had been foretold by Him; "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we were healed" (Isaias liii. 5); and the Psalmist says: "For I am ready for scourges; I have been scourged all the day, and my chastisement hath been in the mornings" (Ps. xxxvii. 18—lxxii. 14).

Our Lord bore all this disgrace with a set purpose, and it was to teach us the shame and disgrace of sin. Men think very

little of the disgrace of sin, whilst they magnify the importance of every little injury which is inflicted on their personal dignity and self-esteem. They do not care very much that they have cast dishonour upon their own souls, and defaced the image of God within them; they do not think much of having deeply stained or destroyed the beautiful garment of God's grace; but they are keenly alive to the smallest degradation offered to the body they are so careful about. How could our Lord more effectually teach us that sin is a real disgrace—which must be atoned for by disgrace and shame—than by thus "being ready for scourges," and bearing "Himself the chastisement of our peace"?

We cannot look at the spectacle of Jesus being scourged at the pillar, and think that each one of the cruel blows which cuts into His sacred flesh represents sin, and that the ignominy which He is enduring is only the proper punishment of sin, without being stirred up to some sort of feeling of shame for the part that we have had in it. Can we afford to be so very nice, to stand so much on our own personal dignity, and pamper ourselves, as we are inclined to do, when our Lord is taking on Himself the shameful punishment of our sins?

But, let us consider for a moment longer the circumstances of the case. Look at Jesus and that crowd that surrounds Him. It represents the passions and bitterness of the human race. You will see amongst them the fiery and malignant Jew, urged on to hatred by the pride of race and the force of prejudice, ready to pour out the bitterness of his heart on his suffering Lord; you will see the hardened Roman soldier, callous to blood and suffering, accustomed to a thousand deeds of rapine and violence, ready once more to become the instrument of cruelty and tyranny, and men stained with every description of crimes. These are the men who come, one by one, to inflict their cruel blows on the Sacred Body of Jesus. We turn away with horror, as they come forward in long succession to continue their work of cruelty, and shudder to think that our Lord should have allowed such wretches to strike Him. But, after all, are not these the fittest representatives of our sins? How can the sins we have committed by our pride and rebellion be better represented than by these Jews? How can the sins of self-indulgence and impurity, and all other sins, be more suitably pictured than by the crowd of hardened men who surround our Lord?

As we gaze on the torment of the scourging, we may well ask ourselves what was it that gave the weight and sting to the blows of these executioners? It was not their power, or the power of darkness—it was the sins of men, in which we

have a part. We may recognize our own sins in the blows which are falling, thick and fast, upon His Sacred Body. The sins of pride and wilful disobedience, by which we have cast off His yoke—are not these there? The sins of sensuality and self-indulgence, by which we have sullied our conscience—these, too, have their share in the painful scene. It was to expiate the guilt and shame of such sins that our Lord deigned to submit to the disgrace of being thus publicly scourged.

There is something which gives to our sins a peculiar malignity, and that is the greater knowledge which we possess, and the great deliberation with which we sometimes sin. How much more cruel is the blow which is inflicted by one who knows precisely and clearly the evil he is doing, as we do! Many have, perhaps, offended more grievously, as far as external transgression goes, but there are, perhaps, few who have brought to the commission of sin a more accurate knowledge, and a greater deliberation, than we have.

Then, as we gaze on Jesus suffering this cruel torment, let us think, with sorrow and shame, of the selfishness and pride for which our Lord is bearing His most painful scourging, that by "His stripes we may be healed."

Oh, then, my dear brethren, let us ask for ourselves, and for all poor sinners, that at this holy time, at least, we may learn to be ashamed of our sins, and to love, as we ought, Him who has taken their burden on Himself.

SERMON XVI.

The Stations of the Cross.

"Let us go forth, therefore, to Him without the camp bearing His reproach" (Heb. xiii. 13).

WE have now come to the very week of the Passion. Palm Sunday may be considered, my brethren, as the formal and solemn opening of the last scene in our Lord's life. Jesus entered into Jerusalem in triumph as a victor, and "a very great multitude spread their garments in the way, and others cut boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way: and the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosannah to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosannah in the highest" (St. Matt. xxi. 8). The palm branches which the people carried in their hands, and the triumphal shouts of the people, were the signs of His victory. Men do not rejoice in their victory till the battle is over, but it is enough for our Lord that He has begun the battle. "He went forth conquering, to conquer," and nothing could resist His power.

Yet how meek and lowly was He, even in the moment of His triumph! "Tell ye the daughter of Sion; behold thy King cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of her that is used to the yoke" (St. Matt. xxi. 5). He needs no soldiers, and nothing of the grandeur of this world, for His glorification. He is content with the poor, simple crowd that surrounds Him, and with the voices of the children crying Hosannah before Him, since, in Himself, He has all the dignity and glory, all the power and empire, which the military display, and costly trappings of earthly kings are intended to represent.

We, too, my brethren, have to take our part in our Lord's triumph. The Church blesses the palms and the branches of trees, and puts them into our hands, that we may carry them before Him, and raise our voices with Hosannah to the Son of David; but we must remember that these palm branches mean victory. He that has fought and conquered with our Lord, or he who intends, however humbly and diffidently, to fight the good fight in His company, may well bear the palm of victory; but the cowardly and the selfish have no right to that glorious emblem.

The palm branch of this day should, then, be to us as a

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pledge that we will follow our Lord in His conflict, that we will never be ashamed of Him, but take up the cross with Him, "bearing His reproach," so as to be found worthy to share His victory.

That we may learn to take up the cross and follow Jesus, we cannot do better, during this holy season, than give our attention to the Stations of the Cross. This is a devotion much loved and strongly recommended by the Catholic Church, and dear to all the saints. In it we follow our Lord in His journey to Mount Calvary, in company with the holy women who wept over Him, and mark, if we may say so, each one of His footsteps, by dwelling in spirit on all the incidents of the way, till we come to stand at the foot of the cross. There is no better way of meditating on our Lord's Passion, so as to learn a lesson from His every word and action.

You have often, my dear brethren, made this journey in spirit, and it will be suitable to the season of the Passion to go over again some of the thoughts which the devotion is calculated to inspire. There are fourteen Stations, the pictures of which are to be found in almost every church. These make the "Way of the Cross," and we must pause for a moment before each of them to join our thoughts and our hearts with our Lord, and make Him some suitable offering of prayer.

We begin with the First Station—Jesus is condemned to death. We see our Lord standing before Pontius Pilate, with His hands fast bound, and still wearing His crown of thorns. He is pale, and worn, and covered with blood; "from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness in Him" (Is. i. 6). And yet He preserves that look of dignity and command which must at all times belong to Him. We can hear the shouts of the mob: "Not this man, but Barabbas!" "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him, crucify Him!" "We have no King but Cæsar." Pilate is before us, weak and uncertain, trying to excuse himself, and wishing to keep well with both God and man, if it were possible. "I am innocent of the blood of this just man, look ye to it." "His blood be upon us and upon our children."

Here is the Lord, before whom Pilate himself, and all that crowd, had one day to be judged; before whom we, too, must all appear, one by one—each in his turn; and now He allows Himself to be thus unjustly sentenced, that He may be able to find mercy for us in our day of trouble. Let us listen once more to those shouts; they are not merely the cries of the mob—they are the voices of men's sins, which call for condemnation upon Him who has allowed Himself to be loaded with them.

"The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all" (Is. liii. 6); and we may, all of us, hear our own sins joining in that clamour, and crying out against Him. For our sake, O Lord, Thou didst bear this unjust sentence; for us wretched sinners, judgment was pronounced against Thee. Remember us, then, in our terrible day, when we are standing before Thy tribunal, and our sins call for condemnation.

But the cross is now brought forward to be laid upon Him. Hard and heavy it is, and painfully does it press on the wounded shoulders of Jesus. He is spent with loss of blood, and exhausted by the pain and fatigue of the weary night He has passed; and yet He takes up the cross cheerfully, and embraces it willingly, because it represents the weight of the sins of men, which He has undertaken to bear. Let us think of the share which we have in laying this burden upon Him; every sin we have committed goes to make up that load which Jesus so lovingly and so cheerfully bears. Should we not, at least, put out a hand to bear the weight? Should we not be willing to carry some part of the cross? "He that will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." Now is our time for showing that we are willing to do so.

We come next to one of the incidents recorded by tradition—that, as He was on His way, loaded with the cross, Jesus fell heavily to the ground. The road was rough, and the crowd thronged round Him on all sides; the soldiers were impatient and brutal, and His strength was exhausted. Well might it be so, after all that He had suffered—after the scourging and crowning with thorns, and the long night of pain and sleeplessness which He had passed. So he fell, and that fall opened once more the wounds that were closing, and bruised once more the bruises which He had already received. He fell, that we might not fall. He would bring to our thoughts the misery of the Christian soul falling into sin. When we sin we fall, and the pain which our Lord suffered in His Sacred Body, when crushed upon the ground under the weight of His cross, is only too accurate a representation of the effect that fall produces in the Christian soul, and the pain which our Lord deigns to suffer in sympathy with us. Our Lord fell, that we might rise. Often does it seem that the burden we have to bear is too heavy for us, and that we must fall under it. Well, our Lord condescended to experience the same weakness. We see Him fall, but it is to rise again, and to take up His load once more, to bear it to the end. Shall we not try, at least, to take up our burdens with Him, even if they appear to us too heavy to be borne? They will be light, if only we carry them in company with our Lord Jesus.

But Jesus meets His Blessed Mother on the way. They have been separated during the Passion. It was His will that during His public ministry she should be away from Him, to teach men to break through the ties of flesh and blood; but she had been with Him at the beginning, when He worked His first miracle at Cana, and is now to be with Him at the end. Who can tell what Mary suffered in her absence? She knew of the betrayal; she knew of the scourging; she had heard the shouts of the multitude, and her heart had gone with Him through it all; but now she is to see Him face to face. She sees her Son as at Nazareth, "beautiful above the sons of men" (Ps. xliv. 3), whom she had seen so lovely, so commanding, so endearing—her Lord, and, at the same time, her Son; she sees Him now, bending under the weight of the cross. His face is pale and bruised; on His brow He bears the thorny crown, and from every thorn which pierces His head the blood trickles down. How shall she bear to meet Him thus? The sight of His suffering is that sword of grief which was foretold to her by Simeon, and deeply does that sword now force its way into her heart.

What meeting could be more tender, yet more painful, than this between the Son and His Mother? Jesus knew how deep would be the wound which the sight of His pain would inflict on His Blessed Mother; yet He willed it to be so, that she might be the Queen of Sorrows, and that, by sharing in His Passion, she might be the Mother of sinners. How often have we, her other children, whom Jesus gave to her upon His cross, renewed the sorrow of that moment, when we have presented ourselves before her as unworthy Christians and rebellious children, disgraced and bowed down by the burden of the sins we have ourselves committed?

By the agony of that moment, let us entreat our Blessed Mother to help us to look on the saving wounds of Jesus with her loving eye, that His suffering countenance may be deeply impressed upon our hearts. *Sancta Mater istud agas, crucifixi fige plagas, cordi meo valide*—"Holy Mother, imprint deeply on my heart the wounds of thy crucified Son."

"And going out, they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon: him they forced to take up His cross" (St. Matt. xxvii. 32). Our Lord could no longer bear His cross without help, so the Jews compelled a man whom they met on the way to carry it for Him. This Simon of Cyrene bore the cross, indeed, but only did so because he couldn't help it, and may be taken as the pattern of all those who bear their crosses unwillingly and without profit. We all of us have to suffer in some way; but a great many do so unwillingly, and repine and murmur at every

trial; they suffer, indeed, because it is the inevitable lot of men, but they have no share in the happiness of bearing our Lord's cross, since, like Simon of Cyrene, it is only because they cannot escape from it.

Is it not true, my dear brethren, that many of us have to suffer enough to make us saints, if only we bore it well? The sight of Jesus carrying it with so much pain ought to do something, at least, to make us love the cross, and glory in it. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi. 14). So says St. Paul; but can we pretend to glory in it, if we are so very impatient of everything we ourselves have to suffer? If we have not the courage to love the cross, and, as our Lord tells us, to "take up our cross daily," let us learn, from Simon's example, to bear the necessary trials of life, and the trouble of all necessary duties, with patience and cheerfulness, and an earnest desire to unite what we have to bear to our Lord's heavy cross, and to carry it with Him.

We next come to a very touching incident of our Lord's sad journey. The holy woman named Veronica was one of those who had followed Jesus grieving; she saw His face covered with blood, and the toil-drops gathering on His brow as He laboured under His cross.

She made her way through the crowd, and offered Him a towel to wipe His face—she thought nothing of the soldiers or of the bystanders—she cared nothing for what people would say—but considered only the compassion and tenderness she felt for Him. It was a trifling thing after all; but Jesus stopped and accepted her offering. He could not do otherwise, because it was the offering of a loving heart. Will not our Lord accept our offering also? There is no act of piety or kindness so small that Jesus will refuse it: the cup of cold water given to the poor for His sake—the act of mortification or self-denial done in His honour—the fervent prayer or act of devotion which we make in memory of His sufferings—all these He will accept, as He did St. Veronica's handkerchief. This we know very well; yet, how seldom do we make such offerings? At least, let us offer the good works, the prayers, the visits to the Blessed Sacrament, the mortifications which are required of us during this Holy Week: they are not great things, but loving hearts will secure their acceptance.

But we return once more to our Lord's painful journey, and again see Him fall under His cross. What does this second and most painful fall suggest to us? Is it not the evil done by the relapsing sinner, who, when he has been forgiven and clothed anew in the garment of grace, falls, again and again, into the

same sin? "Who have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away . . . . crucifying again the Son of God and making Him a mockery" (Heb. vi. 6). How often have we committed this evil, and, after penance and the "good word of God," have returned to our evil ways? And it is not as if this were simply the consequence of human frailty; it is, generally, because we have not been in earnest in avoiding it. If men really meant to keep out of sin, and used ordinary pains to seek the proper remedies, there would be very few relapsing sinners. Let us then, see our Lord covered with fresh blood from this second fall, and think that He bore it as a special atonement for the injury which we have offered to God by many repeated acts of sin—by sinning, again and again, with such faint efforts at amendment.

Our Lord next speaks to the women of Jerusalem, who have followed Him sorrowing; and the words which He addresses to them are the only stern words that He utters during the course of His Passion. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves and for your children . . . . for, if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (St. Luke xxiii. 28.) Our Lord's Passion is a lesson, and He would have us read it aright. It is not merely a touching spectacle which calls for our sympathy. The words which He now speaks He means for all the sinners of the earth. He would have them look at Him and learn the justice of God. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. x. 31).

If sin is an evil so great that this most painful sacrifice is required to purchase mercy for sinners, what will be the fate of those who, in disdain or by impenitence, reject the mercy offered to them? If the Lamb, who was without sin, must pay such a price for the iniquities of others, which He has undertaken to discharge, what will become of those who are sinners themselves if they fall into the hands of God's justice?

Truly, there is nothing which can make us realize so vividly the enormity of sin and the severity of Infinite Justice, as the sight of the Passion of our Lord. How long and how often, my dear brethren, have we looked at Jesus suffering? Can we say that we have learned the lesson which He teaches us? or do we still need the stern words which He here addresses to the women of Jerusalem?

But now our Lord's painful journey is ended, and He falls for the third time, His labour is done, and His strength is exhausted. He has come to the place where He is to die, and He can no longer support the weight of His cross. Truly it is a

wonderful thing, in the eyes of faith, to see Jesus thus spent and exhausted! He, the "Word made Flesh—He, "in whose hands are empire and dominion"—without whom "was made nothing that was made"—has now become quite powerless!

He has taken upon Himself our nature, and with it our weakness; He would taste to the uttermost the misery of feebleness and helplessness. How many of our sins come from weakness? We sin by yielding to the frailty of our nature, and our Lord had compassion on us, and took our weakness upon Himself, that He might "give us power to become the sons of God," and that He might enable us, by His grace, to rise superior to the miseries and frailty of flesh and blood. When we see our Lord thus exhausted for our sakes, we must take courage, and be resolved to fight hard against human weakness in the strength which His grace supplies to us.

"They divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, They divided My garments among them, and upon My vesture they cast lots" (St. Matt. xxvii. 35). The Station which we have now reached shows us Jesus in the midst of His enemies cruelly and roughly stripped of His garments. We can fancy how great was the pain He suffered when His wounds were again opened by this rough treatment, and how the blood began once more to flow; but who can tell how deeply He feels the indignity to which He is exposed? No one but our Lord Himself could possibly understand the reverence which belonged to Him; and every insult, every reproachful word, must have been more painful to Him than we can conceive. How keenly, then, must He have felt the shame and insult of being thus publicly exposed to the derision of His enemies! But this outrage, also, was the appropriate punishment of the iniquities He had taken upon Himself, and He would not spare Himself.

Sinners seek to hide themselves; they would cover up their crimes, and hide them even from their own eyes. The day will come, however, when all the veils which cover our sins —all the pretences and excuses by which we deceive ourselves and others—will be stripped off, and we shall be covered with confusion. It will, indeed, be a terrible shame and disgrace to us if we have to stand as criminals, with all our sins upon us, before the tribunal of that God in whose eyes "all things are naked and open;" and it was to spare us from the confusion of that day that our Lord bore thus to be rudely stripped on Mount Calvary. To save us He "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii. 2) and this was the beginning of the shame of the cross. Can we see Him bearing it without being

resolved, if necessary, to endure cheerfully some little reproach for His name's sake?

When stripped of His garments, Jesus is laid down upon the cross, which is the altar of His sacrifice. "He was offered because it was His own will" (Is. liii. 7). This was the altar which He had chosen for Himself, and on it He is laid as a victim. He lifts His eyes to the Eternal Father, and offers, in sacrifice for the sins of men, the pain He has to bear, the blood He is to shed, and the death He is to undergo. How often had this sacrifice been represented even from the beginning of the world! How many sacrifices had been offered to God in ages past, which were pleasing to Him, simply because they represented "the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world!" How often, again, was this sacrifice to be renewed upon our altars even to the end of time!

He Himself was the High Priest as well as the victim of the sacrifice. "I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down myself" (St. John x. 17). It is He who, by the hands of cruel men, offers Himself for us, and willingly does He stretch out His hands to receive the nails which are to fasten Him to the cross. He suffers the torment of these nails with joy, because, by them, He is to fasten to the cross the "handwriting of the decree that was against us" (Col. ii. 14). He stretches forth His Hands to receive the nails, and they are driven through His hands and feet into the wood of the cross, crushing and tearing His sacred flesh in their passage. Oh, Christians, let us listen to the sound of those blows which tell us that Jesus is irrevocably fastened to the cross! When Abraham was commanded to sacrifice the son whom he loved, and the victim was bound upon the altar, even when the sword was raised to strike, an angel came to stay the father's hand. God was satisfied by his obedience. But Jesus is "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" and these nails bear witness to the irrevocable decree of love by which He is fastened to the cross, until all is consummated.

Can we look at the complete and loving sacrifice of Himself which Jesus makes, and not feel that we are called upon to make sacrifices for Him also? We have not "resisted unto blood, fighting against sin," and if we had done so, it would be but little in proportion to what He has done for us.

But now comes the closing scene. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (St. John xii. 32). His cross has been raised from the ground, and for three hours Jesus is to hang upon it—"a spectacle to angels and to men." "All the day long I have extended My hands to a people that

believeth not; and contradicteth Me" (Rom. x. 21). His body is racked and distorted with pain—pain from His smarting wounds, pain from the racking of every limb, pain from the burning thirst which parches Him, and the deadly faintness which creeps over Him. And His body does not suffer alone; He will not spare His sacred soul. His Passion began with mental agony; and it was His will that it should conclude in utter abandonment and desolation, so that His human nature should taste the cup of death even to the dregs. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (St. Matt. xxvii. 46).

"I will draw all things to Myself." Draw us to Thy cross, we beseech Thee, O Lord. How wonderful has been the power of that crucified form over the hearts of men! What a powerful attraction have that bowed head and those extended arms exercised upon mankind! Martyrs and confessors, men and women, all ages and ranks, have been drawn away from everything this world could give, to the foot of that cross. It is the place for sinners. There we can best repent of our sins; there we can best wash them away in that cleansing Blood, for the "Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (I. St. John i. 7). There is St. Mary Magdalen, the very pattern of penitents, and there, too, we must find our place.

The foot of the cross is the school of all virtues; where else did the saints learn the indefatigable zeal, the tenderness and self-devotion by which their lives were distinguished? Their constant desire was to stand at the foot of the cross with Mary, and to suffer and learn with her. "*Juxta crucem tecum stare, et me tibi sociare, in planctu desidero*"—"My desire is to stand beside the cross with thee, and to unite my sorrow with thine." Such was the sentiment that filled the hearts of all the saints.

At the foot of the cross all Christian virtues grow and are perfected. The Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is like the heavenly dew which falls upon the earth, and alone gives fertility to the soil. Then let us take our place at the foot of the cross, and pray that there love and self-devotion may spring up even in the barren soil of our hearts.

"It is consummated." Everything has been done by Almighty God for the salvation of men. Abundantly, and more than abundantly, has Jesus purchased for us redemption and sanctifying grace, and it remains for us to see that this grace is not purchased for us in vain. "It is consummated." Our Lord has drained to the dregs the cup of grief and suffering, and "Jesus, again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold the veil of the Temple was rent in two,

from the top even to the bottom, and the earth quaked and the rocks were rent" (St. Matt. xxvii. 50).

Let us pass on from this scene of external confusion to gaze for a moment at the desolation of the Blessed Mother of God. The body of Jesus was taken down from the cross and placed lifeless in her arms. "Oh, all you that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow" (Lament. i. 12). The sword of grief which Simeon had foretold passes through and through the heart of Mary, as she gazes on the lifeless body of her Son, and counts over the wounds with which it is pierced. And the body of Jesus is laid in the sepulchre. Our Lord died and was buried that He might rise in glory. He was buried to cast a ray of His brightness upon that dark grave which is waiting to receive us. Oh, my brethren, let us learn to follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus, and so live with Him and die with Him, that we may deserve to be partakers of His glorious Resurrection.

SERMON XVII.

Christ Risen.

"Why seek you the living with the dead? He is not here, but He is risen" (St. Luke xxiv. 6).

On this day, my dear brethren, we are to rejoice with our risen Lord. Let us begin early, and set out for the sepulchre with the holy women. "And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen. And they said one to another, Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And looking, they saw the stone rolled back. For it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe, and they were astounded; who saith to them, Be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen; He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him" (St. Mark xvi. 1).

How lovingly, and yet how sadly, these holy women went! They had bought sweet spices, the best and most precious things they could provide, and they would not lose a moment in making their offering of love. They set out in the early dawn, with heavy hearts, full of regrets and tenderness They were oppressed by many fears, and saw many difficulties. "Who shall roll away the stone?" But love was strong enough to overcome all obstacles, and to brave all dangers. And their sorrow is changed into joy. He whom they have come to mourn over—whose body they were to anoint with their sweet spices—has risen in His glory, and is "clothed with light as with a garment" (Ps. ciii. 2). "He is risen; He is not here."

You have, perhaps, been early this Easter morning, with the holy women, to welcome our Lord. You went to the holy altar to receive that same glorified Body which He raised this day from the tomb, and you carried with you, as they did, loving hearts, full of the fragrant odours of affection and repentance, with many tears for the past, and good resolutions for the future—with mourning over the Passion of Jesus, mingled with rejoicing over His triumph. If we welcome Jesus in this spirit He will not fail to fill our hearts with the brightness of His

glorified Presence, and make the Easter Sunday the day of all days. "This is the day the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein" (Ps. cxvii. 24).

This is the day of our Lord's triumph; He is victorious over all His enemies. That Body which was, but now, laid in the grave, wounded and bruised, pale and lifeless, bearing upon it the sad traces of all the outrages to which it had been exposed, is now glorified. He is "transfigured" before us; "His face shines as the sun, and His garments are white as snow." Every trace of weakness and suffering has for ever disappeared, and His wounds, the tokens of defeat and pain, have become the pledges of victory, and the most conspicuous marks of glory.

Our Lord has changed the pain of the cross for everlasting and unspeakable glory and blessedness; He has changed the ignominy which surrounded Him for songs of praise. "Vah! thou that destroyest the temple, and in three days buildest it up again; save thyself, coming down from the cross." "He saved others, Himself He cannot save! Let Christ the King of Israel come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Our Lord has changed all these cruel and bitter reproaches for the song of the angels. "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory and benediction."

On the cross our Lord appeared to men to be defeated. What could be more complete than the triumph of His enemies? "Let us cut Him off from the land of the living, and let His name be remembered no more" (Jer. xi. 19). But that very defeat has been changed into victory—or, rather, was in itself victory—and He has risen as a conqueror, to put all His enemies to shame, and to subdue all things under His feet. Our Lord rose victorious over all the power and machinations of men. The Jews had condemned Him to death out of envy—to exalt themselves, and to carry out the ideas of national grandeur which they had imagined to themselves; but the rising of our Lord from the tomb was their confusion, and the beginning of their downfall as a nation. But the victory was not only over men. Jesus had to fight, as we have, not merely "against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Ep. vi. 12), and men were but the visible instruments of these spirits of wickedness.

By His death and Resurrection our Lord overcame the dominion of the evil one, broke his bonds, and set his captives free. He was victorious over death, "that, through death, He might destroy him who had the empire of death—that is to say,

the devil—and might deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to servitude" (Heb. ii. 14).

"Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over Him" (Rom. vi. 9). "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (I. Cor. xv. 54).

But our Lord did not triumph on this day for Himself. It was a small thing for the Son of God to be victorious over every creature, or over all creatures together. He triumphed for us, to show us how we, in our own time and way, might conquer also. "In the world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world" (St. John xvi. 33). It sometimes appears as if the world and the powers of darkness were too strong for us, and that we must be overcome, or almost that we are already overcome; but did not our Lord triumph at the very moment when to men he seemed to be defeated? So it has been a thousand times with His Church upon earth. Men have, again and again, supposed that she was destroyed and her enemies triumphant; but the victory came, as our Lord's triumph on this day, just when all hope seemed to be over. What more gracious and beautiful sign of ultimate success and complete victory could Jesus have left to His children who are struggling upon earth than this glorious rising upon Easter Day?

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein." Throughout the whole of this octave the Church keeps on repeating these words, as if no others could express her feelings of joy and triumph.

"This month shall be to you the beginning of months; it shall be the first in the months of the year" (Ex. xii. 2), for "Christ our Pasch is sacrificed." Of all Christian solemnities, Easter holds the first place; it is the most joyful and the most triumphant of all days, and the one fullest of encouraging thoughts.

Our Lord chose that His Resurrection should, in a special manner, be the groundwork of our faith. St. Paul says: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain . . . . . and if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. Then they also, that are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable; but now Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep" (I. Cor. xv. 14). In this the Apostle is but following the example of our Lord, who Himself made His Resurrection the proof and sign of His Divinity. He says: "An evil and adulterous

generation seeketh a sign; and a sign shall not be given it but the sign of Jonas the Prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights; so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" (St. Matt. xii. 39). Our Lord made the same prophecy, in another shape, when He said, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said, Six-and-forty years was this Temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days? But He spoke of the temple of His body" (St. John ii. 19).

The Apostles, therefore, went out to preach, and they rested their teaching on this one great fact—which they made the foundation of faith—that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that they were the witnesses of it; and when they assembled together to choose St. Mathias to be one of the College of Apostles, in place of Judas, it was expressly because "one of these must be made witness with us of His Resurrection" (Acts i. 22).

As we ought constantly to glory in our faith, and to thank God, without ceasing, for having revealed it to us, we ought with all our hearts to glorify God, and triumph on the day on which this great sign and foundation of faith was granted to man.

But faith does not go alone: the beauty and joy of faith is in the hope which accompanies it; and our resurrection is quite as much the miracle of hope as it is of faith. It puts before us in a most distinct, almost tangible, way, the one great need of man—that is, hope beyond the grave, a glorious immortality. Without this, all that the world can give is nothing, and is quite insufficient to satisfy our yearnings. Without this we are "of all men the most miserable." It is the one thing in which no human power, or grandeur, or knowledge can help even in the least degree, and yet it is the one thing we need. Nothing that ever was thought of by man can cast a single gleam of light upon the darkness of the grave; but if the day is to come when "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. xv. 53), we may well be patient of trials and sufferings, and of the grave itself.

Jesus has made His own Resurrection the example and pattern we are always to have before our eyes, on which we are to fix our thoughts in all trials and emergencies, by which we may learn to walk in His footsteps, to take up the cross and follow Him; since "if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live also together with Christ." (Rom. vi. 8). The Resurrection, then, is the feast of our faith, our hope and confidence, and well may we say with the whole Catholic Church, "this is the day which the Lord hath made."

But in rising again our Lord did not forget sinners; He died

for sinners, and He rose again for sinners. The glory He assumed on this day was not so much to put His enemies to shame, as to give hope and comfort to penitent sinners; and we cannot fail to see how very tender He is in His triumph to sinners, even to those who have been unfaithful to Him in the course of His Passion. He seems to single out penitents and to bestow on them special marks of His favour. He did so because those who had been traitors to Him in time of need might well fear His indignation in the day of victory, and, it may be, because He knew how very few of us there would be who could lay any claim to His mercy, except as being penitent sinners.

The tradition of the Church is that His first visit after His Resurrection was made to His own most Blessed Mother. She had stood at the foot of His cross, and suffered with Him more bitterly than all others, and we cannot doubt that He visited her on that Easter morning, to turn her sadness into joy. His work was done, and He came to her to renew, in a certain sense, the joy of the holy house of Nazareth, and with it the secrecy with which the details of His hidden life are shrouded; and therefore it is that no mention is made of her by the Evangelists.

Next to His Blessed Mother He chose to distinguish St. Mary Magdalen. She had wept bitterly at the foot of the cross, and, therefore, she was to have her share in the giory of the Resurrection. Our Lord did not regard her sins, but that great love by which she had washed them away; and, therefore, He favoured her beyond all others in that special manifestation which He made of Himself. "And Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping . . . . and when she had thus said she turned and saw Jesus standing: and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her, Woman why weepeth thou? Whom seekest thou? She, thinking it was the gardener, saith to Him, Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him and I will take him away. Jesus saith to her, Mary. She, turning, saith to Him, Rabboni (which is to say, Master). Jesus saith to her, "Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God" (St. John xx. 11).

In this history we cannot but be struck with the gentle care which Jesus had for the penitent sinner Magdalen. He led her into the garden, that she might weep over His tomb, and then, when her heart was full of repentance and love, He appeared to her, and blessed her with the first sight of that glorious body which He had raised from the grave, and sent her as His messenger to carry the glad tidings to his Disciples. The same

forgiving gentleness is to be observed in His treatment of His Appostles. They had abandoned Him in the time of trial. After all their great promises, not one had been found to stand firm, but "leaving Him they fled." Might they not expect that, when He returns to them a victor after His terrible conflict, He might have some sterner rebuke for them? But no; He appears to them, and, in return for their denial and abandonment, He brings the message of peace. "Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace be to you.' And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The Disciples, therefore, were glad when they saw the Lord" (St. John xx. 19).

This, then, my dear brethren, was the way in which our Lord avenged Himself on those who had deserted Him; He brought them His message of peace, and showed them the wounds by which He had purchased peace for them, and then once more took them to His heart. What He once did for His Apostles, He now does for all Christians. He calls us all to the sepulchre, that we may understand our own unworthiness, and see how often we have been traitors and deserters, and to be led to grieve over our sins. Then, when He has touched our hearts, He brings us the message of peace which He gave to His Apostles. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth do I give unto you" (St. John xiv. 27).

At Easter, more than at all other time, our Lord calls upon sinners to come to Him, and to turn away from their evil ways. The whole of Lent has been a preparation for this holy time, and everywhere has the message of Christ gone forth to call men to repentance. "Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee" (Eph. v. 14). Who can resist this call?—who can remain hard-hearted and obstinate, in spite of all the loving efforts of Jesus to arouse him?—who can be content to remain dead in sin, now that Christ has arisen gloriously from the grave?

Our Lord calls upon us all to arise from our sins to a new life. He addresses Himself first to those who are buried in the deep and deadly sleep of mortal sin, and He calls upon them, as He once called upon Lazarus, to arise and come forth. If they will only come to Him, He will forget all their past evils, and restore them to a new life. No matter how bad they may have been, no matter how evil the lives they have led, He will receive them kindly and lovingly, as He did St. Mary Magdalen on this Easter day. Pardon is now offered to every one—to the weak and cowardly, to the negligent, and even to those who have sinned by deliberate treachery.

But mortal sin is not the only sleep, and it is not only great

sinners whom our Lord calls upon to arouse themselves. The atmosphere of this world has an effect upon all men, and its business, its cares, and its pleasures make us all drowsy for spiritual things. We are told in the parable of the ten virgins that, both wise and foolish, "they all slumbered and slept," so on this glorious Easter day our Lord calls upon us all to arise—the sinner to lay aside his wickedness, and come to the fountain of life; the tepid and slothful to arouse themselves to a more serious care for their own salvation, and even the most perfect one to "put on the Lord Jesus," and to press on to perfection with greater zeal and earnestness.

Our Lord rose from the tomb glorious and perfect. It was in our true human nature, body and soul, that He rose from the dead; but He had left behind Him all the frailties and miseries of our mortal state. He had laid aside all bodily weakness and pain, and had left in the grave all the swathing bands that had been wrapped around Him, and He rose without any taint of mortality. This He would have to be the type of our rising; He calls upon us to cast off sin, and all its bondage, and all the affections which hold us captive, that we may rise with Him to a new life.

But we cannot rise with Him to victory, unless we are willing to take some share in the conflict. When our Lord brought peace to His Apostles, He showed them His hands and His side, that, from these glorious wounds, they might learn the true path of peace. In the same way, when He rises from the dead and calls upon us to follow Him, He points to these tokens of the battle, and reminds us that we, too, must fight and conquer, if we would arrive at His peace and His glory. Men think to obtain peace by yielding, and so making a truce with the enemy; but our spiritual enemies are such that no truce can be made with them, and there is no alternative between victory and slavery. If we do not bravely cast off the yoke of the enemy, and conquer him with our Lord, there can be no true peace for us.

Oh, my dear brethren, how happy it would be for us all if we could learn our Lord's Easter lesson, and set ourselves seriously to conquer our interior enemies, and strive to break the bands that hold us, so that we might truly rise with Christ! Our Lord has first conquered for us and broken our fetters, so that it is only our own fault if we are any longer held fast by them. "Thou hast broken my bonds, I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise, and I will call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxv. 16).

But, "Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more;

death shall no more have dominion over Him, for in that He died to sin, He died once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God: so do you also reckon that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vi. 9). In the Resurrection our Lord, in a special manner, gives us the example of perseverance. He quits the tomb, and it is for ever, that death may no more have dominion over Him." At this Easter time there are a great many who have been aroused by the grace of God from spiritual death, and restored to life by His sacraments; but, alas! there are a great many who very soon and very easily fall back again into sin, and are but little the better for the great grace they have received.

"He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved" (St. Matt. xxiv. 13). This is what our Lord Himself teaches us, and He has made the mystery of His Resurrection the sign and the lesson of perseverance. "He is risen, He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him." Our Lord rose, and instantly the stone was rolled away, and the grave-clothes cast off, and Jesus went forth for the great work of His forty days on earth. 'Why seek ye the living with the dead?" (St. Luke xxiv. 5).

He sets the example to sinners, that they are at once to rise to a new life—to doing something. When God's grace has been given to them, they are at once to begin the works of the life of grace; they are not to remain idle, lingering about the places, and companies, and occasions they have quitted. "Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, and not the things that are upon the earth" (Col. iii. 1). The new life we have received needs to be supported by the thought of heavenly things. "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also;" and we must raise our thoughts and affections to heavenly things, "where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God," if we would remove our hearts from the dangers which beset them upon earth.

"And they knew Him in the breaking of bread." There is one other great subject connected with this Easter festival with which I may very well conclude—it is the great duty of Easter Communion. There is no duty of a Christian life more sacred and solemn than that of receiving the Blessed Sacrament at Easter. It is the special way in which we are to acknowledge the Paschal sacrifice offered for us. "Christ our Pasch is sacrificed, therefore let us feast not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I. Cor. v. 7). By receiving the Blessed Sacrament we put ourselves in union with the Passion and Resurrection of our

Lord. "For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come" (I. Cor. xi. 26).

At this time we are bound specially to make this solemn commemoration, because it is the very anniversary of the institution of the Holy Sacrament. That the Blessed Eucharist might be for ever intimately associated with His Most Blessed Passion, Jesus chose for its institution the moment of His last supper, when that Passion was about to begin, that, when His Apostles called to mind the solemn words, "Do this in remembrance of Me," their thoughts should at once be carried back to all the touching and painful scenes of that night.

Paschal Communion, however, is not required merely by custom and by feeling; it is a duty laid upon us in the strongest manner by the Catholic Church. It is called "Communion," because receiving the Blessed Sacrament is the special outward sign which her children are bound to give of being members of the Church. "We, being many, are one bread, one body, all who partake of one bread" (I. Cor. x. 17). If any one, without sufficient excuse, fails to receive Communion at the time, he is guilty of a mortal sin, and, in a sense, cuts himself off from the communion of the Catholic Church. There is a certain time fixed for the performance of this duty, and every Christian is bound to use all his efforts to receive the Blessed Sacrament at the time specified.

The obligation, moreover, is one which keeps on until it is satisfied. This is necessary to remember, because there are some duties which have no further claim on us when the time is past. If a person, for instance, neglects to hear Mass on Sunday, he commits a great sin, if it is by his own fault, but the obligation is at an end, and he is not bound to hear Mass next day to make up for his omission; but with the precept of Easter Communion it is different. The law binds you to receive the Blessed Sacrament at the prescribed time, but if you neglect it during that time you are bound to receive the next day, and the next day to that, and so on; and if you will not obey this command you are living in a perpetual breach of one of God's greatest commandments, and in open disobedience to His Church.

But, my dear brethren, is it not terrible to think that we need thus to be urged to the fulfilment of so sacred a duty? We are like the poor and the blind who are invited to the royal banquet, who must be driven by force to partake of the feast He has provided. "Go ye into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in"

In the Holy Eucharist let us learn to "know Him in the breaking of bread" with the disciples of Emmaus—and this history will suitably conclude our thoughts on Easter Communion.

"And behold, two of them went the same day to a town which is sixty furlongs from Jerusalem, named Emmaus. And they talked together of all the things which had happened. And it came to pass that, while they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus Himself also drawing near, went with them. And He said to them, What are these discourses which you hold with one another, as you walk and are sad? . . . . Then He said to them, O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so enter into His glory? . . . . . And it came to pass, whilst He was at table with them, that He took bread, and blessed and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke in that way, and opened to us the Scriptures? And rising up the same hour, they went back to Jerusalem . . . . and told what things were done in the way, and how they knew Him in the breaking of bread" (St. Luke xxiv. 13).

SERMON XVIII.

The Glorious Life.

"There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not" (St. John i. 26).

WE have gone through the history of our Lord's Passion, and thought of all He suffered in body and mind. He seems like to us in all things; but in Him, my brethren, there is another life which we know not, and even in the moment of His supreme desolation and anguish, He is the Judge of the living and the dead, and has in His hands all power and glory. Travellers tell us how they see and touch the trunks of the great trees in the dim light of the tropical forests; but their summits are far away, lost to sight, in a sea of verdure and glare of sunlight, high above their heads; so all the details of the life and death of Jesus are put before us, and we seem to know Him; but "His magnificence is elevated above the heavens" (Ps. viii. 2), and the heart of man cannot fancy the glorious life which belongs to Him, of which He has come to make us partakers. Even when we seem to be most familiar, He is "One in the midst of us, whom we know not."

In explaining the fifth article of the Creed, the Catechism says: "By the words 'He descended into hell,' I mean that, as soon as Christ was dead, His Blessed Soul went down into that part of hell called Limbo;" and "By Limbo I mean a place of rest, where the souls of the just who died before Christ were detained." "They were detained in Limbo because they could not go up to the kingdom of heaven till Christ had opened it for them." Our Lord was to make His triumphal entry into heaven, surrounded by those souls whom He had redeemed. The just and holy men, the faithful servants of the Lord, who had so long been in "Abraham's bosom," were to be the first fruits of the victory of the cross, and the first to take possession of the glory which had been purchased for men. "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in." And this "King of Glory, the Lord who is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battles" (Ps. xxiii. 7), did not enter in unattended; but was accompanied by a vast train of liberated captives, since He "had ascended on high, and led captivity captive."

But the Lord would not wait till the day of His formal

triumph had come; He went at once to gladden the hearts of those who were expecting Him, and filled with His brightness the place of rest in which they had so long reposed. "In which also coming, He preached to those spirits that were in prison" (I. St. Peter iii. 19), on which St. Cyril says: "Rightly did He say, 'It is finished.' But He was come to be the Lord of the dead as well as the living, and the hour was now calling Him to go and preach to the imprisoned spirits of the lower world." He bowed down His head and died, not only to atone for our sins, but because the spirits of the just were calling Him to come to their aid. Let us fancy how great was the joy in that place of captivity when He appeared; the long delay and expectation were forgotten. Lovingly they greeted Him, and gratefully they thanked Him, and "in His light they saw the light"—the light of glory, which was never to be taken away from them. It will be so with us, one day, we hope, my dear brethren, when the days of exile are ended, and, perhaps, a time of punishment and reparation is past. Then our Lord will come to us as our Deliverer, to comfort us, as He did those faithful souls, and introduce us into His kingdom. Oh, how beautiful will He then be to our eyes!

The glorious life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the glorious life He has prepared for His faithful, is put before us in the Five Glorious Mysteries. These are: 1. The Resurrection; 2. The Ascension; 3. The Descent of the Holy Ghost; 4. The Assumption; 5. The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Of the three first I need say but little now, because I spoke of them at some length at Easter-time and Pentecost, so I will merely name a few of the thoughts which each feast presents.

The Resurrection is specially the mystery of faith; in it our Lord puts before us the glorious life which He has assumed. It was the miracle to which He again and again referred as the great evidence of His Divinity: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up again"—"I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from Me; but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down; and I have power to take it again" (St. John x. 17).

In this mystery we can fancy our Lord coming to us, as He did to His Apostles, when He "came and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be to you," and showed them His hands and His side. We may well meditate, as we say the prayers, on His victory over all His enemies; how His divine power has put all things under His feet, "raising Him up from the dead, and setting on His right hand, above all principality, and power, and virtue, and domination, and every name that is named . . . .

and subjected all things under His feet." We must think of the qualities of the glorified Body which He has raised from the dead, as the example of that change "when this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I. Cor. xv. 53)—of the gift of peace which He has brought to us as the first fruits—that "peace which the world cannot give."

We may think, also, of our Lord's special tenderness to penitent sinners, as shown in his kindness to St. Mary Magdalen; and of the lesson of perseverance which He gives us in His resurrection, since "Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him, for in that he died to sin, He died once; but in that He liveth, He liveth to God" (Rom. vi. 9). The holy women, too, come before us with their offerings, as "very early in the morning they came to the sepulchre, bringing the spices they had prepared" (St. Luke xxiv. 1). And we may well join with them in making our choicest offerings to Jesus risen.

The Ascension is the mystery of hope—since our Lord goes before us to prepare for us a place where we, too, may enjoy that glorious life with which He is now clothed. We may fancy ourselves present with the infant Church on Mount Olivet, and listen with them to His last words—words of reproach for their "incredulity and hardness of heart," and words of encouragement: we may beg for our share of that last blessing which He left with His Church as, "lifting up His hands, He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven" (St. Luke xxiv. 50).

We have to think, too, in this mystery, of the last glorious vision which the Apostles had of their Master: how beautiful He appeared to them as He "rose above all the heavens"—and of the glory of His triumphant entry into the kingdom of heaven, surrounded by the countless host of souls whom He had redeemed.

But he went to prepare a place in which there was to be room for all: "In my Father's house there are many mansions;" and when we meditate on His triumphant entry, we cannot help thinking also of the place prepared for ourselves, and how we are to get there, and also of the angel's words to the Apostles: "Why stand you looking up into heaven; this Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts i. 11). We can make this meditation in union with Blessed Mary, since she was the centre of that Church on earth which gazed up after Him with such fond

and longing eyes; and we may well say to her, "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

In the third Glorious Mystery—the Descent of the Holy Ghost—charity is the virtue specially put before us: the Holy Ghost is the Love of the Father and the Son, and "the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5). The glorious life of Christ is made made manifest by the coming down of the Holy Spirit: His grace, poured into the hearts of the Apostles, raised them to a new and supernatural life on earth, which was the beginning of the glorious life which was to be theirs in heaven. In spirit we may enter into that "upper chamber, which was, in a certain sense, the birthplace of the Catholic Church, and think of the ardent longing and expectation which filled the hearts of the Apostles, as they waited for the day of Pentecost, and prepared themselves for its graces: "For John, indeed, baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. . . . . You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i. 5, 8).

Who was this Holy Ghost? He was the Paraclete, or Comforter, whom our Lord had promised to them to abide with them for ever, and teach them all truth: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you (St. John xiv. 26).

The sixth article of the Creed speaks of the Holy Ghost, and teaches the Catholic faith concerning Him. "The Holy Ghost is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity," who "proceeds from the Father and the Son," and "is equal to the Father and the Son, for He is the same Lord and God as they are." "The Holy Ghost came down on the Apostles on Whit-Sunday, in the form of parted tongues, as it were, of fire, to confirm their faith, to sanctify them, and to enable them to found the Church." The same faith is expressed in the Nicene Creed in these words: "And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and life-giver, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who, together with the Father and the Son, is adored and glorified: who spoke by the prophets."

The Apostles spent ten days in prayer with the Blessed Virgin in the midst of them, preparing for the coming down of this Holy Spirit, the true and living God, into their breasts. We can fancy how perfect was their preparation to receive His gifts

since their preparation corresponded to the fulness of the Divine Spirit they were to receive. Our meditation on the mystery is to be, at the same time, a prayer that our hearts may be ready for the grace of God that is to be bestowed upon us. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death"—pray for us, beyond all other things, that we may know how to receive and correspond with the grace which God will give us in the day of trial and temptation.

We must think of the "parted tongues, as it were, of fire" as the symbol of the enlightening, warming grace of God, which produced such wonderful effects in the hearts of the Apostles, and, spreading from them through the Church of God, has made itself felt in every age, giving fertility to the cold hearts of men, and eloquence to the tongues of those that want utterance, and courage and strength to the hands of the feeble, to do great things for the glory of God. "The Spirit of the Lord had filled the whole earth, and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice" (Wis. i. 7). Such, my dear brethren, are some of the thoughts on which it is well to ponder as we say these Glorious Mysteries.

I now come to the fourth and fifth Glorious Mysteries—the Assumption and the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin. In the earlier mysteries the glorious life of our Lord Himself was put before us, but in these later ones we have to think of this same glorious life as shared in by His creatures; in the example of the Blessed Mother of God—the greatest and most perfect of all His creatures. Her Assumption is the pattern of a happy death, by which we are led on to think of death as the gate of the glorious life; and in her coronation we have before us, as a subject of meditation, the incorruptible crown prepared for those who are faithful—the "eternal weight of glory."

Our Lady's Assumption is the greatest of all her feasts, and the only one observed as a holiday of obligation. It is celebrated on the 15th of August and the ensuing week, so that, at the present moment, the Church Office is full of it; and day after day we hear the words: *Hodie Maria virgo cœlos ascendit, gaudete quia cum Christo regnat in æternum*—"This day the Virgin Mary ascends into heaven; rejoice that she reigneth for ever with Christ." It is the greatest of her feasts, because it is the conclusion of her labours and sufferings, and casts a brightness over all that has gone before. Her Divine Son seems to say to her with the Spouse in the Canticles: "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers have appeared in our land, the time of pruning is come: the voice of the turtle

is heard in our land: arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come"

A devotion to the Blessed Virgin is one of the conspicuous marks of the Catholic Church. Mary herself prophesied that it should be so in the words of her *Magnificat:* "He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid, for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, because He that is mighty hath done great things for me, and holy is His name" (St. Luke i. 48). These words have been literally carried out in the Church of her Divine Son, and every age has given her some fresh title of benediction, because every age has brought out more fully the grandeur and the privileges contained in her title of Mother of God. As devotion to Mary is a distinguishing sign of the Church of Christ, so is it a token of a good Catholic. I do not mean that all good Catholics display their devotion in the same way, or that all make it equally conspicuous; but, I think, it may safely be said that every good Catholic must really be devout to the Blessed Virgin, and that the more devout we are to her, the more surely are we in the way of salvation.

The Assumption is the happy death of the Most Blessed Mother of God. She was left, according to tradition, many years on earth after her Divine Son had ascended to heaven, that she might be a nursing mother to the Christian Church. God had chosen to bring about His Incarnation by her means, and to give salvation to men by her instrumentality and co-operation; we can understand, therefore, that He willed her to be also His instrument in establishing that Church by which the Incarnation was to be preached to men, and its benefits handed on to the end of time. These years on earth were to our Blessed Mother years of exile. "Where your treasure is, there also your heart will be," our Lord tells us, and her heart and affections were with her Son at the right hand of God. If St. Paul, and, after him, all the saints of God, have been ready to exclaim, "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ," we can understand how intense the longing of that Holy Mother must have been to leave the barren desert of this earth, and to join Him to part no more. But she was in this, as in all things, the "handmaid of the Lord," and she waited in perfect patience for His good time. At last the hour came when she was to die. "The winter is past; arise, my beloved, and come." Such to her was the summons of death.

St. John Damascene gives an account of our Lady's death in these words: "It hath been handed down to us from old time that, when the Blessed Virgin so gloriously fell asleep, all the Apostles who were wandering to and fro in the earth for the

salvation of the Gentiles, were in a moment carried off into the air, and assembled at Jerusalem. And being there, there appeared to them a vision of angels, and there was heard the sound of the heavenly powers singing psalms, and so, amid the manifestation of His glory, into the hands of God she resigned her holy soul. Her body, which, by an unspeakable mystery, had held God, was carried forth amid the chants of angels and Apostles, and laid in a sepulchre at Gethsemane, and there, for three days, the songs of angels never ceased.

"After three days the sound of angels' singing had ceased, and at that time the Apostles, who were there, along with Thomas, the only one who had hitherto been absent, and who had come three days late, but was now fain to worship that body, which had held God, opened the tomb. But the holy body was now nowhere to be found. There remained only the cloths in which it had been enshrouded, and an unspeakable savour proceeded from them, and they therefore again closed the grave. Confounded by this strange mystery, they were only able to imagine that the Same whom it had pleased to take flesh of the Virgin Mary, and of her to be made man, and to be born, being God the Word and the Lord of Glory, and who had kept her maidenhood unbroken even after childbirth, had also been pleased, after her departure hence, to honour her stainless body, whilst it was still free from corruption, by taking it away before the common and universal resurrection."

Such is the beautiful tradition about our Lady's decease, and it is the constant belief of the Catholic Church—though it has never been declared to be a matter of faith—that our Lord did not allow her holy body to see corruption, but glorified it, and "assumed" it into heaven in anticipation of the General Judgment.

Mary died by the natural law of the human race, and, to be in all things like her Divine Son, her death, moreover, was to be to us all the model of a happy death, and she was to be made the perpetual intercessor for the dying. The Church, in one of her prayers on that day, says: "O Lord, may the prayers of the Mother of God help Thy people, whom, although we know she passed away, according to the condition of human nature, we still feel to intercede for us with Thee in the glory of heaven." In meditating on the Assumption, then, we have to think of the joy of making a happy end, and what we must do to secure that happiness for ourselves.

But, first, let us congratulate our Blessed Mother on the surpassing glory and happiness of her Assumption. Think how she longed to close her eyes to this world, which to her was

such a place of exile—such a "desert land without path and without water"—how she desired to open them again to see the countenance which she so loved; In one moment she was to behold that face which was so dear to her, which she had watched so lovingly at Bethlehem and Nazareth. Oh, how had she longed to see Him face to face in His glory, with "the glory, as it were, of the only-begotten of the Father!" How lovingly did Jesus meet His Blessed Mother! The Church says to every poor sinner at the hour of death: "May Jesus Christ appear to thee with a mild and joyful countenance, and appoint thee a place amongst those who are to stand before Him for ever." With what a joyful countenance would He appear to His Blessed Mother! How tenderly would He present her before the throne of the Eternal Father, as the first in dignity, and the most gloriously perfect of all His creatures! In her, more than in all other creatures, was displayed the power of His grace. "He that is mighty hath done great things for me, and holy is His name."

The Assumption was a day of glory to God, and of joy to all creatures. "Mary hath been taken to heaven; the angels rejoice, they praise and bless the Lord." The saint from whom I before quoted, St. John Damascene, describes the joy of this festival in these words: "This day the holy and animated ark of the living God, which had held within it its own Maker, is borne to rest in that temple of the Lord which is not made with hand. David, from whom it sprang, leapeth before it, and in company with him the angels dance and the archangels sing aloud. . . . . This day the stainless maiden, who had been defiled by no earthly lust, but ennobled by heavenly desires, returned not to dust, but, being herself a living heaven, took her place among the heavenly mansions. From her true life had flowed for all men, and how should she taste death? But she yielded to the law established by Him to whom she had given birth, and, as a daughter of the old Adam, underwent the old sentence, which even her Son, who is the very Life Itself, had not refused; but, as the Mother of the Living God, she was worthily taken by Him unto Himself."

And now, my dear brethren, let us turn to the lessons which our Lady's Assumption teaches. If we would make our last end glorious and happy, so that our death may in some degree resemble hers, it is clear that we must try to imitate the chief characteristics of her life. What was it that made her end so calm and so happy? It was, in the first place, the spotless purity of her life. God had, by a special grace, so watched over her as to preserve her from every sin, so that she could go

before the throne of God without the least stain. A pure conscience is the best preparation for a happy death. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." Blessed, also, because they can come without fear into His presence. But Mary habitually did the will of God—she was always "the handmaid of the Lord;" and the spirit of obedience and submission is the great source of peace. What disturbs most of us is the constant struggle to do our own will instead of the will of God, and this makes life uneasy and death bitter. If we could be satisfied to leave life and death in the hands of God, and wish only to do His will, half the sorrow of death would be taken away.

Our Lady had nothing in this world to which she was attached. By this we mean that, although she was full of love and sympathy for all the children on earth whom her Son had intrusted to her care, yet her love was all in God and for His sake, and therefore could not for a moment draw her away from Him.

Our Lady, then, was a model of these three great qualities which lead to a happy end—purity of conscience, the spirit of obedience, and detachment from this world—and in these she has been followed by all the saints of God. If we would make our last end like theirs, we too must cultivate these same virtues. But it was the immense burning love for Jesus which was the crown of Our Lady's Assumption: it is love alone which can conquer all the pains and sorrows of the hour of death, since "love is as strong as death." "If, then, we aim at imitating in some sort the glory of Mary's Assumption, it must be by striving to obtain some share of her great love for Jesus.

In the last Glorious Mystery—the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary—we have to meditate on the bright crown of glory which Jesus placed on the head of His Blessed Mother. The glory which creatures possess in heaven is simply a reflection of the infinite glory of their Creator, and increases in proportion as they approach His throne. Mary's place was the highest. The greatest of the archangels is the servant of God. "He maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a burning fire" (Ps. ciii. 4). Mary, too, was His handmaid, and the humblest of His servants, but she was more—she was chosen also to be His mother. She is like the woman described in the Apocalypse, "Clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (xii. 1). "She cometh forth as the morning, rising fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array" (Cant. vi. 9).

The glory of heaven corresponds with the favours bestowed by God on His creatures, and their co-operation with them.

Mary's crown of glory, then, was beautiful in proportion to the privileges she had received; she was crowned for her Immaculate Conception, for her spotless virginity, for her Divine maternity, and for her special privilege of closest intimacy with God made man—for Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and Calvary.

"On Thy right hand stood the Queen, in golden raiment, wrought about with variety" (Ps. xliv. 10). In virtue of her ineffable union with God, she has become the Queen of all creation. She is the Queen of the angels, since to her has been given a higher ministry than theirs. She is the Queen of Apostles; their office was to announce the Word of God to men, but she was to bring forth the Word Incarnate, and to take part in the wonders of the Incarnation. She is the Queen of martyrs in right of the sword of grief which pierced her heart at Calvary; and, finally, Queen of all God's servants, since she is the humblest and most obedient of them all.

But we are not idly to contemplate the beauty of our Lady's crown, but to remember that in our Father's house "there are many mansions," and that a crown of glory is reserved for each of us if only we will strive, by good works, to make our calling and election sure" (II. St. Peter i. 10).

"So run that you may obtain. . . . . They indeed strive that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one" (I. Cor. ix. 24).

SERMON XIX.

The Ascension.

"In My Father's house there are many mansions" (St. John xiv. 2).

On this day, my dear brethren, a wonderful picture is placed before us. We see the Church on earth, the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord gathered together, and in the midst of them the Blessed Mother of God; they are all gazing up into heaven with intent faces and longing eyes, looking after their beloved Master as He is taken from them. They see Him going up to heaven, and follow Him on that bright path by which He has gone from them, even after He is concealed from their sight. "And when He had said these things while they looked on, He was raised up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they were beholding Him going up to heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments, who also said, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven'" (Acts i. 9).

That last vision of Jesus must have remained always deeply impressed upon the hearts of the Apostles. Wherever they went, in whatever company they were, whatever the world might offer to them, they would still have before them the thought of Jesus going up to heaven. When they stood before Kings and magistrates, when they were hated and reviled, and cast out for the name of Jesus, what greater encouragement could they have than the remembrance of their Lord's glorious Ascension, and of that bright path by which He entered into His glory? The world might do its best to corrupt them by its treasures, but no earthly riches could for one moment compare with the glory which their Master had displayed to them. In pain, in exile, in discouragements of all sorts, they needed no better comfort than the remembrance of the promise that one day He should come again "as they had seen Him going into heaven."

The Ascension was the fitting completion of our Lord's victory. At His Resurrection He was triumphant over all His enemies, and that, at the very moment when to men He appeared utterly defeated; earthly enemies and the spirits of darkness had been overcome, and "the Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit thou at My right hand, till I make thy enemies thy

footstool'" (Ps. cix. 1). He was no longer to remain on earth, but was to enter into His glory, and to enjoy the fruits of the victory He had won, and on this day we see Him completing His work, and entering in triumph into His kingdom.

The forty days we have just passed through are a specially wonderful time. They were the days which the Apostles spent with their glorified Master upon earth to hear His last words, and to complete the lessons He had so long been giving. These days were like the harvest time—ripening and bringing to maturity, in a few hours, the labours of the whole year. They could now see the force and meaning of those things which had before been incomprehensible to them. Before His Passion our Lord said: "I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (St. John xvi. 12); but in those days they had learned the mystery of the cross, and the time had come for them to receive the last commission which Jesus was to entrust to them.

Two great things our Lord had to do during these forty days: He was to convince His Apostles and Disciples of the truth of His Resurrection, that they might be witnesses of it to the whole world and to the end of time. He appeared to them, therefore, at many times, and in many places—sometimes to a few in private, sometimes to a multitude of the Disciples gathered together. "He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures, and He was seen by Cephas, and after that by the eleven; then was He seen by more than five hundred brethren at once, of whom many remain until this present, and some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the Apostles" (I. Cor. xv. 4).

He appeared to His Disciples, and showed them His wounds, and eat with them, to convince them that it was He Himself who was risen, and yet all this He did, so as to teach them that He was not coming back to their mortal life, but was to raise them to a higher and immortal life, of which He was giving them the example. They knew Him, and yet they knew Him not; they heard Him and touched Him and eat with Him, and yet He was not with them as before, but was living a mysterious and glorified life in the midst of them. "But when morning was come Jesus stood on the shore: yet the Disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus, therefore, said to them, Children, have you any meat? They answered Him, No. He saith to them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find. They cast, therefore; and now they were not able to draw it, for the multitude of fishes . . . . . Jesus saith to them, Come and dine. And none of them who were at meat durst ask Him,

Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord. And Jesus cometh and taketh bread and fish in like manner" (St. John xxi. 4).

The object, therefore, of this holy time was not merely to convince His Apostles that He had really risen again, but to raise them up from a mere mortal and natural life to that higher life which it was the object of His coming to establish upon earth. "Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth" (Coloss. iii. 1).

But there was another great work to be done in these forty days, which could not be carried out till the mystery of the cross had been unfolded. Our Lord remained on earth with His Apostles to complete the establishment and organization of His Church. The Apostles were to go forth into the whole world as witnesses of His revelation; they were to teach all nations "to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them." For this purpose our Lord had to form them into an organized society, fitted to endure till the end of time. He had to bestow on them the fulness of the doctrine they were to teach others. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables;" and, moreover, He was to give them the power to speak and act in His name, and to hand on to others the great gifts He had given to them. To do all this was the work of the forty days.

When Jesus had gone up into heaven the Apostles needed the grace of the Holy Spirit, but they required no further instruction; they understood exactly what was the work before them, and how to set about it. Even before the Holy Spirit had come upon them they proceeded, of their own authority, to fill up the vacant place in the Apostolic College, and to choose St. Mathias as one who "must be made a witness with us of the resurrection" (Acts i. 22).

The Apostles were prepared for every emergency as it arose, and acted in all things, not as mere individuals following their own ideas, but as members of a thoroughly organized and lawfully-established society.

What our Lord had done in part, or for a time, during His mortal life, He now completed and put, if we may say so, into working order. He had before made St. Peter the foundation and central authority of His Church, when He said to them: "I say to thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (St. Matt. xvi. 18). The meaning of this promise, and its effect

in His Church, had now to be brought out clearly; and "when therefore, they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith to Him, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He said to him, Feed My lambs. . . . . Feed My lambs. . . . . Feed My sheep" (St. John xxi. 15). Here our Lord, after His resurrection—after St. Peter's denial—confirms His former promise, and gives it a more definite meaning by making him the shepherd of the whole flock.

With the organization of the Church, and the establishment of its hierarchy, went two other gifts, for the sake of which the Church had been formed into an organized society. These were the commission and authority to teach, and the power to bestow sacramental graces. Here again we find our Lord, after His resurrection, completing the gift which He had before made to His Apostles: "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 18). See how this is completed and carried out by our Lord after His resurrection: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. When He had said this He breathed on them: and He said to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain they are retained" (St. John xx. 22).

This mysterious forty days, then, my dear brethren, we must look upon as the time in which our Lord established His Church in detail, and gave His Apostles precise instruction in all that they were to do and teach, and appointed the matter and form of those Sacraments by which grace was hereafter to be bestowed on the human race. We may, then, indeed call it the harvest time when all the words that He had before spoken were to bear fruit in the establishment of His Church. "But there are also many other things which Jesus did;" "Many other signs also did Jesus, in the sight of His Disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, you may have life in His name" (St. John xxi. 25—xx. 30).

And now the moment has come for His departure, and Jesus leads forth His disciples to Mount Olivet to hear His last words. He exhorts and He rebukes them; He promises that the Holy Spirit shall came upon them, "and, lifting up His hands, He blessed them, and it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up into heaven" (St. Luke xxiv. 50).

We can fancy to ourselves how full the hearts of the Apostles

were as they saw Him thus taken up in their sight. They were full of triumph and joy at His exaltation, as they saw Him ascending by His own power, whilst, at the same time, they could not but be sad at the thought of parting from Him. They were full of His last words—of the great work which He had given them to do, and the promises which He had made to them, so they stood gazing after Him till a bright cloud received Him from their sight, and the door was, as it were, shut against them.

As He was taken up into heaven He left them His blessing. As, after the Creation, Almighty God blessed the works of His hands, and it was in the strength of that blessing that all things went on, so our Lord blessed the work which He had established upon earth, and by that blessing gave it the power to live and persevere in spite of all obstacles. This last blessing, which Jesus gave to His Church, was its only strength; He sent it forth amongst men without worldly means, without power or wealth or learning, strong only in this, that His blessing went with them, and remains with them to the end of time.

"Lift up your gates, O ye Princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord who is strong and mighty: the Lord mighty in battle. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory" (Ps. xxiii. 7). This is a joyful day for earth, since the Son of Man ascended as a victor into heaven; but it is a still more glorious day for heaven when the King of Glory enters in. Who can follow the course of our Lord as He passed out of the sight of men to take possession of His kingdom, and to be crowned with the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father! If men come forth with exultation to greet an earthly victor, when he returns in triumph, and sing songs of joy, and make acclamations before him, how much more would the Princes of heaven come forth to meet their eternal Lord! How glorious does that heavenly Jerusalem appear on this day, with its foundations of precious stones, and its gates of pearl, and the glory of God to enlighten it! Would that our imaginations could bring before us for one moment this scene, too bright and beautiful for mortal eyes! Would that we could listen to the songs of triumph, and tender loving homage with which the angels greeted our Lord on this His victory: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction." "To Him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb, benediction and honour, and glory and power for ever and ever" (Apoc. v. 12).

But our Lord did not ascend into heaven for Himself: as He had suffered for us, and risen from the dead for our sakes, so now He ascended into heaven that he might raise up our human nature, which He had taken to Himself. To use the words of St. Leo the Great: "In all verity it was a great and unspeakable cause for joy to see the Manhood, in the presence of that holy multitude of believers, exalted above all creatures, even heavenly, rising above the ranks of the angelic armies, and speeding its glorious way to where the most noble of the archangels lie far behind, to rest no lower than that place where, high above all principality and power, it taketh its seat at the right hand of the Eternal Father, sharer of His throne, and partaker of His glory, and still the very man's nature which the Son hath taken upon Him.

"Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let us also rejoice with worthy joy, for the Ascension of Christ is exaltation for us, and whither the glory of the Head of the Church is passed in, thither is the hope of the body of the Church called on to follow. Let us rejoice with exceeding great joy, and give God glad thanks. This day is not only the possession of paradise made sure unto us, but, in the person of our Head, we are actually begun to enter into the heavenly mansions above. Through the unspeakable goodness of Christ, we have gained more than ever we lost by the envy of the devil. We, whom our venomous enemy thrust from our first happy home—we, being made of one body with the Son of God, have, by Him, been given a place at the right hand of the Father: with whom He liveth and reigneth, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen" *(Breviary Lesson)*.

Our Lord ascended into heaven to take possession of a kingdom for us, and to break down that barrier which had separated heaven from earth. Man was to enter heaven and take his place amongst the angels, and from henceforth, that heavenly gate was to be open to receive the sons of men. From that time forth, a constant stream of the weary pilgrims of earth has poured into that blessed city: the gate is henceforth to be ever open, so that there shall be a constant communion between heaven and earth; by the communion of saints a perpetual bond of sympathy and mutual love is established, in virtue of which the Church on earth glorifies God in His saints, and the blessed in heaven, by their prayers, help their brethren upon earth.

"Ascending on high, He led captivity captive; He gave gifts to men" (Eph. iv. 8). Our Lord had broken through the bonds by which men were enslaved, and on this day He enters heaven surrounded by the vast crowd of holy souls who had so long

waited for His coming. Who can describe the glorious company of the saints and heroes of the Old Law, the patriarchs and prophets who, after their long captivity, were now to enter with their Redeemer into eternal rest, and to see God face to face for all eternity? It had been their privilege in this life to foretell His coming, and to prophecy of Him to their people, and for ages they had waited and longed for the day when He should set them free from bondage. When His blessed soul went down into Limbo He filled their prison with light and joy, and gave them a foretaste of the triumph of this day; and now, with songs of joy, they leave their prison, and accompany Him in His triumphal entry.

"Lift up your gates, ye princes, and be ye lifted, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in." Go forth, ye princes of heaven, to welcome this King of Glory, and that vast crowd of new brethren whom He brings in His train, who are now to join their voices with yours in praising the Lamb who was slain from the beginning of the world, by whose blood all have been redeemed.

But it is not merely great saints and heroes who accompany our Lord on the day of His triumph. "In My Father's house are many mansions." There is a place for the poor and the weak—for those who had but little light and who sinned by ignorance, and who, perhaps, lived very imperfect lives upon earth. The Merciful Judge, who knows "what is in man," and can read the heart of every man, has judged each one according to the light that he possessed, and made full allowance for all the weakness of human nature. He has judged them all in mercy, and, after their long banishment, "now they desire a better, that is to say, a heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 16), and found for them a place in their Father's house.

"In My Father's house there are many mansions; if not, I would have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, that where I am you also may be" (St. John xiv. 2). This, my dear brethren, is the grand hope that the triumph of this day puts before us. Our Lord entering into His kingdom, has prepared a place not only for great and heroic souls, but for every one whom He has redeemed by His Precious Blood. Each one of us may feel assured that amongst those many mansions there is a place prepared for him more glorious than the heart of man can conceive, and it will be by his own fault if he does not one day take possession of it.

All that the world can offer of riches and glory and power cannot for one moment be compared with even the least place in that glorious kingdom, when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be no more, for the former things are passed away" (Apoc. xxi. 4). "Oh, how hast Thou multiplied Thy mercy, O God! But the children of men shall put their trust under the covert of Thy wings. They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure, for with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 8).

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven." These were the words with which the angels recalled the Apostles to the work they had to do on earth. They were not to stand gazing up into heaven, accompanying their Master in their thoughts, and delighting their hearts with His glory; but they must at once set about the work He had given them to do. It was the time for toil, not for rest; they were no longer to be like children, but they must do the work of men to earn their reward. "The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then shall they fast in those days" (St. Luke v. 35). Those days had now come, and they had to return to Jerusalem to enter upon the labours and sufferings of the Apostolic ministry. "And they, adoring, went back to Jerusalem with great joy" (St. Luke xxiv. 52). They went back full of zeal and alacrity, rejoicing to labour and suffer for their Master, and impatient to do His work. They sorrowed, indeed, for His absence, but His words were still sounding in their ears: "I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go" (St John xvi. 7). It was the time for them to exercise the virtues of faith and obedience, and to bear the trials and persecutions of the world; and it was better for them to do this than to enjoy the happiness of His visible presence. Their Master was to come back again; He had "gone into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return," and in the meantime He had left them to make the most of the goods entrusted to their care. "This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come as you have seen Him go into Heaven."

These must have been the thoughts which filled the minds of the Apostles as they returned to Jerusalsm to await the coming down of the Holy Spirit, and prepare themselves in retirement and prayer for the great work that was before. Let us, my dear

brethren, suit these thoughts to ourselves. We have not seen Jesus as the Apostles had, but His words are constantly in our ears, and we can fancy to ourselves, in some degree, the dignity and sweetness of His Ascension. We can imagine the happy home which He has prepared for us in heaven, and the glorious presence of Jesus at the right hand of God: "Whom, having not seen, you love; in whom, also now, though you see Him not, you believe; and, believing, shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified" (I. St. Peter i. 8).

What we have to do is to keep the Kingdom of God constantly before us, and to think of the place which our Lord has prepared for us with Himself. "Whither I go you know, and the way you know" (St. John xiv. 4). The remembrance of this will be to us, as it was to the Apostles, a sure remedy against temptations of all kinds; neither threats nor allurements will have much effect upon those whose hearts are fixed on the glory which God has prepared for His saints. We must next think of the responsibility of the work entrusted to our care. It is not a great work like that which the Apostles had to undertake; it seems unimportant and trivial, perhaps, but still it is the work of God just as much as theirs was, and if we do it well it will bring with it a great reward. Our Master is coming back, and for us, at least, it may be very soon; we have no time to lose, and must at once set about the task enjoined, whatever it may be. The Apostles prepared themselves for their great work by two things—by prayer and by relying on the grace of the Holy Spirit. We, too, must do the work of our Heavenly Master in the same way; we must look for the light of the Holy Spirit to show us what we ought to do, and by prayer we must obtain the strength to do it.

Our Master will return to take an account of His servants, and to see what work they have done in His absence. "Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to render to every man according to His works" (Apoc. xxii. 12). The Lord knows what each one of His servants can do, and He knows how tedious and wearisome it is to human nature to go on labouring day after day. Did he not himself come on earth to toil? In proportion to the zeal we show, and the pain which it costs us to do His will, His reward will be. Let us, then, set our hands to the work before us with that zeal which the Apostles displayed, and we may be sure that the Holy Spirit, who helped them to labour, will not be wanting to us.

Finally, my dear brethren, we must try to join, with all our

hearts, in the universal song of congratulation, which heaven and earth raise to our Lord, and rejoice in His glorious Ascension—not for ourselves, for the good gifts which He has this day given to us, but because He who deigned to suffer and be humbled, even unto death, for us is now triumphant over all His enemies, and reigns a glorious King for ever and ever!

SERMON XX.

Pentecost.

"The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole earth" (Wisdom i. 7).

THE day of Pentecost, my dear brethren, may be called the birthday of the Catholic Church. Our Lord had taught His Apostles, and sent them forth with full power. He had formed His Church into a corporate body, with a complete organization, which would enable it to maintain its unity when spread throughout the whole world, and only one thing was wanting—the spirit of life. It was as yet but a dead body, and was waiting for that light from on high, by which our Lord willed that His Church should live.

There are many things which men can do. They can create very perfect machinery, accurate in all its parts, but they cannot give life, and bid the machine to live. So it is in spiritual things: they can create societies, and can organize and endow them, but they cannot give spiritual life, and make their organization into a living body.

Our Lord would not allow His Apostles to begin their work at once. The fields were white for the harvest; the world was waiting for the message of redemption; but still the Apostles must rest for a while before they entered upon their mission. "And eating together with them, He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (saith He) by my mouth, for John indeed baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and all Judea, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i. 4–8).

It was not to be *their* work. The Apostles themselves and the world must understand that what they said, and did, and taught, was not the work of man, but of God. Men were to be the instruments by which the Church was to be taught and governed, and great powers were entrusted to them, which they might use well or ill; but, after all, they were but instruments, and the society was to be guided and overruled by the power of God. "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (St. Matt. x. 20). The Apostles, and

thousands of their successors, were endowed with great holiness, and the highest gifts that men could possess, but they were not to trust to these for the conversion of mankind, but were to rely on something higher.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not in the loftiness of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of Christ. . . . . And my speech was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and power, that your faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (I. Cor. ii. 1). Thus does St. Paul speak of his own ministry and of his successes amongst the nations—not as the fruit of his own zeal or eloquence, but as the effect of the Spirit of God which accompanied him.

Let us now look into this "upper chamber" where the Disciples are gathered together awaiting the Holy Spirit. They have spent ten days in preparation, united in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. How fervent was this prayer!—how great was the longing which the Apostles felt for the coming of the Paraclete, the "Comforter," their Master had promised to them! They now had experience of their own weakness, and felt the need of help. They were no longer full of self-confidence as they once had been, and would not now venture on the generous, but rash, words they had once used: "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both to prison and to death." "Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, yet not I." They now knew that they must rely, not upon their own purposes and good intentions, but on God's help.

And they were united to the Blessed Mother of God. Mary had been "full of grace" even from the time of the angel's salutation, and she had been, in the most perfect way, the temple of the Holy Ghost; but He was now to descend upon her with the special graces suited to this great day. She was the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore, the Mother of Divine Grace; but she had been left on earth to be, in a special manner, the nursing Mother of the Christian Church. She was to be the model and guide to the Apostles in the great work they had before them, and in her company they prepared for the great gift of Pentecost.

"And when the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were altogether in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were, of fire, and it sat upon every one of them; and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began

to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak" (Acts ii. 1).

Nothing shows us the special meaning and importance of the descent of the Holy Spirit more forcibly than the day chosen for its accomplishment. Pentecost was the feast celebrated on the fiftieth day after the Pasch, and was to commemorate the giving of the law. When the children of Israel had come out of Egypt, and passed through the Red Sea, on the fiftieth day they came to Mount Sinai, and there it was that God made His solemn covenant with them, that they should be His people, and He should be their God. "If therefore you will hear My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My peculiar possession above all people; for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to Me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Exod. xix. 5). Hitherto they had been but the family of Jacob; but when they had received the law on the day of Pentecost they became, in a formal manner, the people of God upon earth.

This same day is chosen for the inauguration of the Church of God. The Paschal Lamb had been the type of Christ's Passion, and so our Lord chose that the giving of the law on Mount Sinai should be the forerunner of the solemn establishment of His Church. Hitherto it had been the family of our Lord; now it was to go forth into the world as the Church of the Living God. "The multitude came together, and were confounded in mind, because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue. And they were all amazed and wondered, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans, and how have we heard every man our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews also, and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians: we have heard them speak, in our own tongue the wonderful works of God" (Acts ii. 6).

Such was the fitting birthday of the Catholic Church. It was no longer the religion of a tribe or a country, but it was to be the Church of the whole earth. Devout men were collected together "out of every nation under heaven," and to them all, on this day, was the Word of God addressed by the mouths of the Apostles. "Yea, verily, their sound had gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world" (Rom. x. 18). The echo, as it were, of this first voice of the Holy Spirit to the nations of the earth, has been continued in God's Catholic Church from that day of Pentecost until this present hour.

There is a great resemblance between the first day of Pentecost, when the children of Israel assembled around the mountain of God to hear His Commandments, and the day of Pentecost, when the Apostles of Jesus were called together to wait for the coming down of the Holy Spirit; and yet how great and striking was the difference! "Go to the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their garments. And let them be ready against the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down, in the sight of all the people, on Mount Sinai. And thou shalt appoint certain limits to the people round about, and thou shalt say to them, Take heed that you go not up into the mount, and that ye touch not the borders thereof; every one that toucheth the mount, dying, he shall die" (Exod. xix. 10).

How great a difference in spirit is there between the people waiting, in fear and trembling, to hear the voice of the Lord, and the loving assemblage of the brethren and Apostles of Jesus praying around His Mother, and looking for the Paraclete, the Comforter, He had promised to them! In these two Pentecosts are displayed the spirit of the Old and New Covenants.

"There came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming." The advent of the Holy Spirit is the coming of a new power upon earth—a power by which the whole earth was to be shaken: a power which this world could not understand, and yet was ever to feel in the midst of it. This was the power which was to establish the Church and kingdom of Christ upon earth: men could see the result, but the motive force was ever concealed from their eyes: it was the stone "cut from the mountain, without hands," which filled the whole earth.

"Parted tongues, as it were, of fire." The Holy Spirit came to bring light and heat upon earth—the two things which are represented to our senses by earthly fire. We need the grace of the Holy Ghost to give light to our understandings, that we may know our way, and, then, fire and fervour to our wills, that we may follow the light given:

"Accende lumen sensibus
Infunde amorem cordibus.
Infirma nostri corporis
Virtute firmans perpeti."

"Oh, guide our minds with Thy blest light,
With love our hearts inflame;
And with Thy strength, which ne'er decays,
Confirm our mortal frame."

From this fire of the Holy Spirit all that is holy and beautiful comes. Just as the light of the sun, which appears to be in

itself one simple, pure ray, is, nevertheless, divided into a hundred different colours, and gives a different beauty to every one of the beautiful things on earth—so does the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is simple in itself, display itself in a thousand different acts of virtue. In every direction in which we look we see, amongst the saints of God, flowers of perfection and holiness, each of which has its beauty from the one source of all excellence—the grace of the Holy Spirit.

If we want to understand the effects which the Spirit of God was to produce on earth, let us first see how great was the change which Pentecost worked upon the Apostles. They were, indeed, changed men. No sooner had they received the Spirit of God than they came forth to preach the Name of Jesus. Hitherto, they had hidden themselves, and were gathered together "for fear of the Jews," but now they were not afraid to speak of their Lord openly before all men: "Therefore, let all the House of Israel know, most certainly, that God hath made both Lord and Christ this same Jesus, whom you have crucified . . . . do penance and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins" (Acts ii. 36–38).

The necessary consequence of the coming of the Holy Spirit was zeal: they could not keep back the truth that they knew, but were impelled to spread it throughout the world: "But Peter and John, answering, said to them: 'If it be just in the sight of God, to hear you rather than God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard'" (Acts iv. 19). Let us ask ourselves, my brethren, have we much of this zeal. We hope that we, too, have received the same Spirit of God; but is His Presence made known by our ardent desire to speak in the Name of Jesus? Can we say with St. Paul: "The charity of Christ presses us" (II. Cor. v. 14)? We may be sure, however, that we have but very little of the Spirit of God, if we have not a little of that zeal which was so conspicuous in the Apostles.

But the zeal which the Apostles showed was not like the ordinary enthusiasm displayed amongst men: it was dependent upon the three great graces which were poured into their hearts by the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost bestowed upon them the gift of spiritual knowledge.

Our Lord had taught them Himself, but they had not understood. His words, indeed, they understood, but they had remained producing little effect in their hearts, until the Holy Spirit came upon them. Then they felt the spirit and reality and meaning of what they had heard. The greatness and over-

whelming importance of spiritual things came home to their hearts, and what before had been mere words became the greatest of realities. It was "the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord," with which the Holy Ghost had filled them, that sent forth the Apostles with such abundant zeal to preach His name. "As it is written, I believed, for which cause I have spoken; we also believe, for which cause we speak also; knowing that He who raised up Jesus will raise up us also with Jesus" (II. Cor. iv. 13).

But mere knowledge by itself was not enough. The Holy Spirit bestowed on the apostles the grace of fortitude. It is hard for us fully to understand how difficult a work it was to preach Jesus crucified for the first time. The cross was at all times "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness;" but to preach His name in that very city in which He had suffered so short a time before—in the presence of those very men who themselves had been instigators, or actors, in our Lord's Passion—this was, indeed, a work requiring courage which none but God could bestow.

Those very Apostles who so shortly before had been afraid of even the least show of danger, were now able to resist all the authority, the threats, and violence of men. They did this, moreover, not in the rash, impetuous way in which they had sometimes acted before, but with that calm, deliberate and gentle courage which the Holy Spirit bestows. "Behold, the men whom you put in prison are in the Temple, standing and teaching the people. . . . . And the high priest asked them, saying, Commanding, we commanded you that you should not teach in His name; and, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and have a mind to bring the blood of this man upon us. But Peter and the Apostles, answering, said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 26).

Here, my dear brethren, we have a grand specimen of the teaching of the Holy Ghost—a specimen of Christian courage which was not confined to the Apostles, but has been seen, in an eminent degree, under the same Divine Guide, in all classes of people, the poor and the weak, the ignorant and little children, as well as in the Princes of the people. It is the sort of courage we all have to learn, if we would save our souls, and it is useless to think that any other good qualities will supply its place. We must obtain from the grace of God the courage to stand up for our faith and duty without flinching, and to "obey God rather than man," or else all the rest that we can do is without avail.

The first effect of the coming down of the Holy Ghost was the superabundant power and zeal with which the Apostles went

forth to preach Jesus, and to establish His Church; but the gift was not a personal one to the Apostles. The Holy Spirit had come down to dwell permanently in that corporate body of the Church of which the Apostles were the leaders. The indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost was to give to this body of men qualities and powers of action which, in a wonderful way, resemble the vitality of the material body. The spiritual life thus bestowed upon the Church gave her in the first place the power of growth and increasing organization. In the nature of things the Church must begin as a small and insignificant body, but she must carry, in herself, all that was necessary for expanding, so as to fill the earth. Our Lord Himself compares His Church to a grain of mustard-seed, which is the least of all seeds, but when grown up becomes a great tree; and it is only the spirit of life that brings about this great change. Wherever it goes, however widely it is spread, this community, which was so small in its beginning, is found perfectly organized and suited to the place into which it is grown; and it is found, moreover, always to be organized in the same way, so that there is a perfect harmony between the parts; and this not by any elaborate scheme, but by what man would call a sort of chance, but which, in reality, is nothing else but the spirit of life within it.

How little we read in the Holy Scriptures of the organization of the early Church! We read of the appointment of the seven deacons to assist the Apostles almost by accident, as we should say; we read that St. Paul and St. Barnabas "ordained to them priests in every Church;" but, still, very little is said of the means adopted for organizing the multitude of believers that was crowding into the Church—and yet, in a few centuries when the whole world had been converted, we find everything in its place; that the infant Church has grown and adapted itself to its increased wants as easily and naturally as the seedling grows into a mighty tree.

The Church was to endure through all ages, and must have the power of adapting itself to the wants of all generations of men. It was not to be the Church of one nation, and to be dependent upon the special institutions of one particular people. It was to pass through all the varied political and social changes which were to come upon the human race, and, for this purpose, it must be a living body, able to accommodate itself to the circumstances of time and place, and yet to maintain one consistent being, and to carry out one unvaried line of conduct. Nothing but the life given to it by the Holy Spirit could enable it to do this.

When, therefore, we see the Catholic Church existing through

the varied history of the world, at home with the civilization of the Roman empire, and equally at home with the hordes of barbarians who broke in pieces that civilization; when we see it surviving the fall of one empire after another, and delivering its message to each in turn, ever changing, and yet always the same, down to our own days, we recognize the great work of Pentecost. "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." It was the Holy Spirit of God that made a mere collection of men into a living body, able at all times to do the work for which it was sent into the world.

Above all things, however, the Church was to be the teacher of men: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and, behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (St. Matt. xxviii. 19). The one special function of the Church was to teach—and it could not fail in this work without ceasing to exist—and it was to teach, not as one who gives a lesson learned by rote, but as ever ready to supply what was needful to the wants of its hearers. It was to teach, too, not as men teach, in an uncertain wavering way, but, as our Lord Himself did, "as one having power."

It is quite beyond the capacity of men to teach in this way—that is, to teach with decision, clearness, and authority—in spiritual things. No man, however learned or good he may be, can possibly do this of himself, because the truths of revelation are beyond any exertion of human intellect. To have a right to teach and power to teach, in a manner worthy of God, men must have a commission from God, and must be guided by God's Holy Spirit; and it was as a sign of this Divine guidance that the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles in a visible shape.

"It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us" (Acts xv. 28). See, my brethren, how the Church began its teaching, and it began so soon! We might have supposed that all the questions which would arise during the lifetime of the Apostles would have been settled by our Lord Himself. But, no! It was His will that in their own time the example should be given of the way in which, in after ages, the Church should settle difficulties, and of the tone of authority in which she should speak.

"It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Even the Apostles themselves could not have ventured to speak in this way, if they were not conscious that they were simply acting as the organ of the Holy Spirit. They had before them our Lord's words: "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of

your Father that speaketh in you;" and therefore they spoke boldly.

In the fulness of time the Apostles went to their reward in heaven, and left their office to their successors. The men, indeed, changed, but the body remained the same, and in it there was always the same Spirit of Life, to teach and to act. It mattered but little who the men might be to whom the Apostolic office was committed; it was not as individuals that they had a right to speak, but as the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost.

As time went on, difficulties arose, as the Apostle had foretold: "Of your own selves shall arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx. 30). Then was heard the voice of the Church speaking in exactly the same tone that the Apostles had assumed in Jerusalem. "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." So it was at the First General Council which defined the Catholic faith against those who denied our Lord's divinity; so it was in those General Councils which condemned the Nestorians and Eutychians, and all who, to use the words of St. John, "dissolved Jesus" by dividing the personality of our Lord, or confusing His divine and human natures.

When fifteen centuries had passed, and a great revolt arose against the Church's teaching, the new ideas were answered in precisely the same way. The pastors of the Church declared, in the very tone of the Apostles, "It hath seemed good to us, being assembled together." "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," proclaimed the faith in precise and unhesitating terms.

And this voice has not died out in our own days. We have ourselves heard the Church teaching in her most solemn way in the Vatican Council, and have seen the words of the fathers, there assembled, received throughout the whole Church as the voice of God.

"The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole earth." The work of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church is, after all, but a means to the sanctification of individual souls. We are, in the sight of God, not a great assemblage of men, but individual souls created to His image, for each one of whom all His gifts are intended. What the Holy Spirit does for the whole Church as a body is but a type of what it is His will to work in each Christian soul. We are all the temples of God, and it is the Holy Spirit abiding in us which alone can make us pleasing to God. Of ourselves we can do nothing, but it is the Spirit of God abiding in us which gives worth to all our words and

actions. "If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God; if any man minister, let it be as of the power which God administereth, that in all things God may be honoured through Jesus Christ" (I. St. Peter iv. 11).

The Holy Spirit must be our teacher if we would have any true knowledge. "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth" (St. John xvi. 13). It is the Holy Ghost alone who can give us the power of understanding the revelation which has been made known to us.

Our Lord sent His spirit on the Apostles, not to be their teacher, in the first instance, but to "bring back to their minds," and enable them to understand the truths which He had taught them; so it is the work of the Spirit in each individual soul to make clear and practical the truths which Christ has taught by His Church.

"Know ye not that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I. Cor. iii. 16). When you think of the Holy Ghost descending in glory upon the Apostles this day, remember, dear brethren, that you are the temples of the Holy Spirit; that He has chosen you for His dwelling, and consecrated you for ever to Himself, and beg of Him once more to light up His sacred fire within your hearts, that you may be worthy of the great dignity to which you have been called.

SERMON XXI.

God, our Judge.

"Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer" (St. Luke xvi. 2).

IN the parable of the unjust steward, my dear brethren, our Lord puts before us the great account we shall have to give some day or other. Every man living, great and small, will have to give an account of his stewardship, and must answer for the use he has made of the treasures entrusted to him—that is to say, he will be judged by his Maker for every thought, word, and deed of his life. The virtue of religion depends, in a great measure, on the sense we have of our responsibility to God; those who keep it before their eyes, and constantly remember that they have to account to God for all they do, are religious people, whilst those who forget their responsibility, or do not act up to it, are irreligious people. The first warning which God gave to man after the fall was to remind him that he was an accountable being, responsible for his own actions. "And the Lord said to Cain, Why art thou angry, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? But if ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at the door? But the lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it" (Gen. iv. 6). When the New Covenant began, the Lord renewed His warning, and again reminded His people of judgment. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts. i. 11). The Apostles were to go forth into the world with great gifts and powers, but they must understand that they would one day be severely called to account for the use they made of the treasures entrusted to them.

The first innate idea of natural religion is that we are accountable to God—that is, that there is One who has both the power and the right to call us to account for our doings. We feel instinctively that we are not our own masters, and that we are bound to obey a higher rule than that of merely pleasing ourselves. It is this feeling of right and wrong, and that we are bound to do right, which is the very foundation of religion. It is very seldom that even the worst men can rid themselves of the sense of responsibility; it comes home to them, whether they

will or not, and testifies against them on the part of God. We see this in the Roman Governor Felix, before whom St. Paul was placed as a prisoner. "And as Paul treated of justice and chastity, and the judgment to come, Felix, being terrified, answered, For this time, go thy way" (Acts xxiv. 25). The conscience even of this pagan soldier was touched, and responded to the Apostle's words when he began to speak of the judgment to come.

The idea of having a Master to whom we are responsible leads us necessarily to the thought of reward and punishment. "If thou do well, shalt thou not receive?" It would be impossible for us to conceive that an infinitely great and all-powerful Master could lay His commandments on His creatures, and then fail to enforce the observance of them. Accordingly, the first idea of God is of one who rewards the good and punishes the wicked. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him" (Heb. xi. 6). And to deserve God's rewards, and escape His punishments is one of the prominent motives for doing good which the Holy Scripture puts before us. The Psalmist, for instance, says: "I have inclined my heart to do Thy justifications for ever for the reward" (Ps. cxviii. 112).

The Creed speaks of judgment in the seventh article. "From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead;" and the Catechism gives the following answers in explanation: "Christ will come again from heaven at the last day to judge all mankind;" "Christ will judge all our thoughts, words, works, and omissions;" "He will say to the wicked, Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels;" "He will say to the just, Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you;" "Will not every one be judged at their death as well as at the last day?" "Yes; it is appointed unto man once to die, and, after this, the judgment."

The Catholic doctrine, then, is that there are two judgments —the general judgment, when the whole human race must stand before its Creator to be judged at the great and terrible day of the Lord—and the special, or particular judgment, in which each individual soul has to be tried. These two judgments are wonderfully different in all their circumstances and surroundings; but yet they are, we may say, but one judgment, since the sentence pronounced in the one is but confirmed in the other.

Let us see what our Lord Himself tells us of the great day which is to come, when, as St. Paul tells us, "the fire will try

every man's work, of what sort it is" (I. Cor. iii. 13). Our Lord says: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with much power and majesty. And He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice: and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them." "Behold, He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of Him." "And when the Son of Man shall come in His majesty, and all His angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of His majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them, one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left. Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. Then shall the just answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee? Thirsty, and gave Thee drink? . . . . And the King answering, shall say to them, Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me. Then shall He say to them also that shall be on His left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and His angels; for I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave not to drink . . . . . And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting (St. Matt. xxiv. 30; xxv. 31. Apoc. i. 7).

Here we have placed before us a picture of that great accounting day, as far as it is possible for us to imagine it: for we cannot possibly conceive it as it really is, since no description could ever enable us to understand it. But much must go before this terrible judgment; the world as it is now, the enemy of God, must first perish. All its riches and power —its arts and sciences—and all the material things in which it trusted must be destroyed. "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth, with the works which are in it, shall be burnt up" (II. St. Peter iii. 10).

"*Dies iræ, dies illa, Solvet sæclum in favilla, teste David cum Sibylla*"—"The day of wrath, that dreadful day, shall the whole earth in ashes lay, as David and the sybils say." And then the dead shall arise from judgment. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall arise again incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I. Cor. xv. 52).

From gorgeous tomb and humble churchyard—from the earth and from the sea—the dead shall arise. The King and his people, the pastor and his flock, the rich and the poor, the good and the bad, shall all come forth. *Tuba mirum spargens sonum, per sepulchra regionum, coget omnes ante thronum.*

How great the trembling and the fear
When the tremendous Judge draws near;
When the great trumpet's blown,
Nature and death shall see amazed
Poor trembling man for judgment raised,
Leaving the dreary tomb.

"And I saw a great white throne, and One sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them; and they were judged, every one according to their works" (Apoc. xx. 12).

And what, my dear brethren, will be our place in this great arising? We, too, must be there, with our neighbours and friends—with our parents and children—all of us to stand before that "great white throne," for, as the Apostle tells us, "we all shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ" (Rom. xiv. 10).

Holy Job says: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God. Whom I myself shall see, and not another; this my hope is laid up in my bosom" (Job xix. 25). "This mortal must put on immortality." But what sort of an immortality? The immortality of the body will correspond with the condition of the soul, by which it is animated.

In this life there are many whited sepulchres—fair without, but full of filth and corruption within. Men can carry about

crimes hidden from their brethren under a fair exterior; the assassin may conceal his deeds under an appearance of friendliness; the impious man may go about amongst his neighbours deceiving them all by his mask of piety; but then it will not be so. What we are in our hearts, what we shall have been found to be in the judgment of God, that we shall be before the eyes of all creation. Oh, how many deceptions will be removed at that great resurrection! How many, whom the world has praised and admired will be found to be but idols of clay!—how many who are now looked up to and revered as saints, and receive titles of honour from men, will be found unworthy in that day! Which of us can stand the terrible light of that day? The more honourable our position, and the greater the reverence with which we are treated by men, the more reason we have to fear. The priest rising amidst his flock, the father rising amidst his children, who can imagine their shame if they are not what they ought to be?—if, "having preached to others, they themselves have become castaways?"

"In the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn" (St. Matt. xiii. 30). Now has that harvest come, and the final separation has to be made. In this life the good and bad are mixed together, and God "makes His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (St. Matt. v. 45). In the hearts of men, too, evil is mixed up with good. You very seldom find any one who is wholly evil, who does not, even in the midst of corruption, retain some good; but then the final separation is to be made. Those who have chosen iniquity as their part, and made their portion with God's enemies, will find that by doing so they have lost all that is good. "He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him; and he would not have blessing, and it shall be far from him. And he put on cursing like a garment, and it went like water into his entrails, and like oil into his bones. May it be unto him like a garment which covereth him, and like a girdle with which he is girded continually." Such is the judgment which will then be pronounced against sinners.

"The Son of Man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity" (St. Matt. xiii. 41). The same place can no longer contain the good and the bad. They had been allowed "to grow until the harvest," that sinners might be converted, and both good and bad might reach their maturity; but now the harvest is come and the great and final separation must be

made; and "He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left." Let us keep this last and terrible separation before our eyes. Each one of us has now to choose on which side He will be found: "You have your choice: choose this day, that which pleaseth you, whom would you rather serve" (Josue xxiv. 15). On which side do you mean to stand on that day? We have to choose between good and evil, but that choice will be for all eternity.

And then the judgment has to be made: a twofold judgment, in which the dealings of God with His creatures will be explained, and the case of each individual made clear. The ways of God's Providence are now mysterious to us, since we "see in a glass in a dark manner," and "therefore judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of hearts" (I. Cor. iv. 5). Inconceivable will that judgment be in its rapidity, its certainty, and its clearness. The light of God will illuminate all hearts, and, at once, "bring to light the hidden things of darkness," and, for good or evil, every secret of each man's life will be displayed. There will no longer be any room for disguise or self-deception in that fierce light, but each one will appear in his own eyes, and before all creatures, as he is in the sight of God. Then will appear what have been the dealings of God with every soul—how bounteous He has been to all—how patient and long-suffering He has been to sinners. He seems, Himself, to condescend to be judged, and to call upon all creatures to judge between Him and His people. "Judge between Me and My vineyard. What is there that I ought to have done to My vineyard, that I have not done" (Isaias v. 3). "To Thee only have I sinned and done evil before Thee, that thou mayest be justified in Thy words, and mayest overcome when Thou art judged" (Psalm l. 6).

"And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting." The awful part of this judgment is that the sentence is final. There is no appeal—there is no room for further trial—there is no longer space for mercy; but the sentence follows, at once, on the judgment, and is irrevocable. On earth there is no case so bad but there is something to hope for—some change, some improvement may be expected, to enable us to bear the evils of the present moment; but, when once that terrible judgment has been pronounced against us, there is no hope of any mitigation, but the sentence is unchangeable, and is for ever and for ever.

But this General Judgment, great and terrible as it is, is, after

all, only the conclusion or second act of another judgment, which has already taken place—and our fate will have already been decided, it may be, for ages, before that great day of God arrives. That day is God's secret: the Apostles themselves, and the faithful of every age, have exhausted themselves in conjecturing when the Lord will come to judge His people: but our Lord's words are plain: "It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father has put in His own power" (Acts i. 7). St. Peter says: "But of this one thing be not ignorant, my beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord delayeth not His promise, as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to repentance" (II. St. Peter iii. 8). But if the last day is so far off, and the time of our Lord's great coming so uncertain, the *first* act of that Judgment is very near: "Behold the Judge standeth before the door" (St. James v. 9). The Particular Judgment is the one which is all-important to us as individuals: it takes place at the very hour of our death, and settles our doom for all eternity. "If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be" (Eccles. xi. 3): what has there been decided will be confirmed at the General Judgment, but will not be changed.

Think, my dear brethren, what elements of terror there are in that secret and solemn judgment. We know not how soon it may be upon us: for all that any one can tell, this very day may be his day of trial: this very day he may hear the words: "Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer." It may come suddenly, but it certainly will not be very long delayed. A few more years, ten, twenty perhaps, and we *know* that that is all. Each one can calculate what remains to him of his life even if it should be prolonged to the full period of human existence—and it is very little. "Shall not the fewness of my days be ended shortly." "Behold, short years pass away and I am walking in a path by which I shall not return" (Job x. 20; xvi. 23). "This therefore, I say brethren, the time is short" (I. Cor. vii. 29), and at the end of this time comes judgment.

Who can tell what it will be to go forth from the body and stand before our Judge? We may meditate on it all our days, but we can never conceive the awe of that first meeting—of that first sight of its Creator which shall be allowed to the soul of man. One moment in this world, surrounded by all the familiar objects on which, perhaps, our eyes now rest every day: the walls, the furniture, the books and pictures, the crucifix, which

we know so well, and, the next, face to face with our Lord Jesus Christ! A few moments before we were surrounded by those dear to us, whose presence seemed a support even at that moment, and now we stand alone before God. "A cry was made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet Him." Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world"—and the soul hath gone forth to judgment. You have, perhaps, my dear brethren, knelt beside the death-bed of some dear friend when the moment of separation came; and you have felt how, in that instant, a dark wall—an impassable gulf—came between you and the one you loved; what must this separation be to the soul that is entering so suddenly into the new and unknown world to come?

"Go ye forth to meet Him!" What must that first meeting be, when man stands face to face with his Creator! On Mount Thabor the Apostles saw our Lord transfigured before them, "and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow . . . . and the Disciples fell upon their face and were very much afraid" (St. Matt. xvii. 2).

One passing glimpse of the glory of Jesus was more than His Apostles could bear; what will it be to us when the veil is entirely removed, and "I myself shall see Him, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."

He has "put on praise and beauty, and is clothed with light as with a garment" (Ps. ciii. 2). He is "beautiful above the sons of men," and the sight of Him cannot fail to draw to Himself the hearts of all His creatures. Oh, how shall we wish at that moment to cast ourselves at His feet, and wash away all offences and estrangements with our tears! But no; the time for that is past, and, instead of a loving Redeemer, we have to meet a strict and impartial Judge, to whom we must reckon to the last farthing.

"Quid sum miser tunc dicturus,
Quem patronum rogaturus,
Quum vix justus sit securus."

"What, then, shall I have to plead,
Who for me will intercede,
When even saints some comfort need?"

In this world condemnation is slow in coming; there is room to hope for delays, and evasions, and excuses. But before that great Judge we can have no such hope. "Neither is there any creature invisible in His sight, but all things are naked and open to His eyes, to whom our speech is" (Heb. iv. 13).

"Christ will judge our thoughts, words, works, and omission,"

and which of us is prepared to give an account of them all? How little do we ourselves know of our thoughts and imaginations! They pass to and fro in our minds, and we easily forget them; and yet these thoughts, if they are deliberate acts and consents of the will, may be grievous sins, and sufficient for our destruction. They are, indeed, the beginning and source of all sinfulness. Our Lord says: "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies—these are the things that defile a man" (St. Matt. xv. 19). The guilt of all these terrible sins comes from the heart which originates them, and yet most people take but little care to watch over the movements of their own hearts.

So, again, with our words: the occasions of sinning are incessant, and St. James tells us that "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (St. James iii. 2). But our Lord's words are: "I say to you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment" (St. Matt. xii. 36). How shall we give an account of the idle words, the uncharitable words, the profane words, the unbecoming words of our lives? Our actions, too, will not satisfy us then as well as they do now, for it is not only the action itself which will be weighed, but the spirit, the feeling, the intention with which it was done. The world is contented with the outward action, and praises us for what we do, without thinking much of our motives; but at God's judgment-seat it will not be so; for there the motives and the heart are the chief things to be considered.

But, most of all, my dear brethren, let us think of the flood of light which will then pour down upon us with regard to all our duties. We shall then, perhaps, see a vast number of things which we could have done, and ought to have done, but did not do. Will not many men be lost for sins of omission—for the neglect of duties to which now they shut their eyes? Oh, how painful will be the awaking of many, who, like Dives, have "feasted sumptuously every day," and hardly trouble themselves to think of what the obligations and duties of life really are! This, my dear brethren, is the account we have to give, and no man can tell how soon he will be called upon to render it.

But, if it is terrible, we have abundant means of preparing ourselves for it. Every day we come before our Judge, we can kneel before Him in the Sacrament of His love. His face is veiled, but He is there on the altar in very deed, ready to hear us and to succour us. We can speak to Him in His tribunal of Penance, and there rehearse the confession we shall one day

have to make; but the confession will now be made to one whose desire is to pardon, not to judge. He is near to us and is a hidden God in the midst of us, ever ready to grant our petitions and supply us with everything needful for our salvation.

"Jesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio
Oro fiat illud quod tam sitio
Ut Te revelata cernens facie
Visu sim beatus Tuæ gloriæ."

SERMON XXII.

Sin.

"I did but taste a little honey, and behold I die" (I. Kings xiv. 43).

IN the parable of the marriage feast, my dear brethren, we read how "the King went in to see the guests: and he saw there a man who had not on the wedding garment. And he saith to him: Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment? But he was silent. Then the King said to the waiters: Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (St. Matt. xxii. 11). This gives us a terrible picture of the judgment of God: there are no long proceedings which admit of delay or excuse, but everything is summed up in this one question: "How came you here, not having on the wedding garment?" So it will be, in substance, at the great judgment at the last day. It is necessary, indeed, that every act of a man's life should be scrutinized, since God "will render to every man according to his works;" but salvation or condemnation depends upon only one question: "Does death find us in the grace of God or in mortal sin?"

See how Holy Scripture insists on the simplicity of this decision: "And another book was opened, which was the book of life, and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire" (Apoc. xx. 12). The name is written in that book, or it is not—there is no compromise: all depends on that one question. Again, the lesson of the marriage feast is repeated in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins: "And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. The wise answered, saying: Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. Now, whilst they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering said: Amen, I say to you, I know you not" (St. Matt. xxv. 6). Here, again, the future of the ten virgins depends on the one question—are they in time or are they too late?

The whole of human life is meant as a preparation for God's judgment; but that preparation is concentrated in the last moment of mortal life, and the whole future depends on whether we die the friends or the enemies of God—that is to say, whether we die in a state of grace or in mortal sin. If we die in the friendship of God our names are "written in the book of life," and every past rebellion is pardoned, and, through God's mercy, we shall remain His friends through all eternity; but if we are found with one single unforgiven mortal sin in our souls at that terrible moment, then we are rebels, and there is no place for us. "Amen, I say to you, I know you not." It is fearful to think what evil one mortal sin will accomplish. It may have been long ago committed, and may have been almost forgotten by the sinner; it may have been a sin of thought, unknown to all save the sinner and His Judge, yet it is enough to separate him for ever from God.

Let us, then, to-day consider the nature and consequences of sin, as they will appear to us at the great judgment. The subject is discussed in the tenth article of the Creed—"The Forgiveness of Sins." On this the Catechism gives us the following answers: "Sin is an offence against God, by any thought, word, deed, or omission against the law of God." "There are two kinds of sin—original sin and actual sin." "Original sin is that guilt and stain which we inherit from Adam, who was the origin and head of all mankind." "Actual sin is every sin which we ourselves commit." "Actual sin is divided into mortal sin and venial sin." "Mortal sin is a grievous offence against God." "It is called mortal sin because it kills the soul and deserves hell." "Mortal sin kills the soul by depriving it of sanctifying grace, which is the supernatural life of the soul." "They who die in mortal sin will go to hell for all eternity." "Venial sin is an offence which does not kill the soul, yet displeases God, and often leads to mortal sin."

The sin which we have now to consider is actual sin, in which is included every offence, great and small, which we ourselves commit. It is important to remember the reason of this name of *actual* sin. The name is given because every sin must be a human act—an act, that is, of the will of man. No external power can ever *compel* you to commit a sin. The devil, the world, and the flesh may do their worst; storms of temptation may come upon you, and suggestions of evil of the most frightful description may fill your imagination; but there is not the least *sin* except by the act of your own will; and, if the will refuses its consent, all the violence of temptation is powerless.

We find this exemplified in the lives of the saints. Holy people are often tempted with a violence which corresponds to the graces they have received; and, accordingly, we read of the saints being sometimes tried by the most abominable thoughts and most shameful temptations. God gave them grace, however, to resist the storm, and steadily to refuse the consent of their will; so that, in the midst of all the evil that was surging around them, their souls remained untouched, and they were still pleasing to God—nay, more, the very storm of temptation which tried them only increased their merit in His sight. "Therefore, we will not fear when the earth shall be troubled and the mountains cast into the heart of the sea. The waters roared and were troubled . . . the stream of the river maketh joyful the city of God; the Most High hath sanctified His own tabernacle. God is in the midst thereof; it shall not be moved" (Ps. xlv. 3).

It is consoling to us to think that no power on earth or in hell can injure our souls, except by our own free consent, and that God will always give us strength to refuse this consent. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh unto thee . . . . thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon" (Ps. xc. 7–13).

On the other hand, the act of the will is sufficient for sin: it is not necessary that any external consequences should result from it. The act may begin and end in the will; it may be a wilful complacency, or a deliberate desire, and nothing more, and yet it may be a grievous sin. Men only look at the visible consequences of sin, and consider it as it regards other people, and, therefore, we are apt to forget that the sin is in the inward act and not in the outward consequences that follow from it. When an evil thought or intention has actually been carried into effect, the act of the will is generally more vehement and determined than when it has been purely mental, and in this way the result increases the guilt, but otherwise the external effect is a mere accident in the sight of God.

We now come to the distinction between mortal and venial sin, which requires some consideration and explanation First consider how immense is the difference between them; there is a gulf, as it were, which separates one from the other. One mortal sin is a greater evil in itself, and more terrible in its consequences, than any possible number of venial sins. Venial sin can easily lead people into mortal sin, and does so only too often; but no amount of venial sins can ever make a mortal sin. See, again, what are its effects; "Mortal sin kills the soul by

depriving it of sanctifying grace," and "they who die in mortal sin will go to hell for all eternity,"

The man who committs mortal sin may have loved God once, and done a great deal to serve Him; but if he perseveres in sin, all the good that he has done is poisoned, and made of no avail for eternity. "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I. Cor. xiii. 3). The sinner, by this one act, has lost his birthright and his place in heaven, has cut himself off from God, and deserved the terrible sentence: Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

With all these terrible consequences, and, although there is no comparison possible between mortal and venial sin, yet we often see one act described as a venial sin, and another, which appears only a degree or two more serious, is said to be mortal. The difference between them, however, is one, not of degree, but of kind. Mortal sin is an act of rebellion against God, whereas a venial sin, however bad it may be, is, for some reason or other, *not* such an act, and between rebellion and non-rebellion there cannot be any comparison.

Every sin is a disobedience to God's Commandments, and, as such, is in itself an act of rebellion against God. "Thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast burst my bonds, and thou saidst, I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20). By every sin we "break God's yoke" and say, "I will not serve." Sin, therefore, in the abstract, and of its own nature, is mortal, because it is essentially an act of rebellion, and in perfect intelligences there could be no such thing as venial sin. We cannot easily conceive a venial sin amongst the angels; an act of disobedience of any kind would be a rebellion, as the angelic nature could not but see and realize, in all cases, the nature of the sinful act. With men, however, it is different; a number of palliations spring from the very weakness of our nature which prevent us from always incurring the terrible guilt of rebellion. Mists arise from the imperfection of our understanding, which lead us astray, so that we do not fully know what we are doing; so our Lord prayed on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

There is, then, in venial sin something or other which prevents the act from assuming the full and complete guilt of rebellion, and, therefore, it does not make us God's enemies, by depriving us of sanctifying grace, Let us consider some of these palliations. In the first place, people are excused in some degree by want of knowledge. Sometimes want of knowledge is so com-

plete as to excuse from any sin, as it is clear that where there is no knowledge of a command there can be no disobedience in not observing it. In many cases, however, ignorance is not so complete as this, and yet it may be sufficient to excuse from the guilt of mortal sin. Our Lord, for instance, foretells to his Apostles that "they will put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God" (St. John xvi. 2); and, again, St. Paul excuses himself on account of ignorance for the things he had done before his conversion: "I give Him thanks who hath strengthened me, Jesus Christ our Lord, for that He hath accounted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who before was a blasphemer and a persecutor and contumelious; but I obtained the mercy of God, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (I. Tim. i. 12). In both these cases ignorance was, to some extent, an excuse; they *ought* to have known better; if they had looked more carefully, perhaps they would have known better; but they did not, and, therefore, perhaps "they obtained mercy because they did it ignorantly in unbelief."

It is not for men to judge to what extent ignorance is an excuse; we cannot tell when it is complete, and when it is a faulty ignorance for which men are, to some degree, responsible, and when it is a mere pretence, as when the Psalmist says of the wicked man: "He would not understand, that he might do well" (Ps. xxxv. 4). God will judge all men according to the means of knowledge they possessed; and it is for us to be lenient in judging of others, and careful to act up to the knowledge we ourselves have.

A sin which, of its own nature, would be grievous, is often rendered venial, and sometimes altogether excused, by want of deliberation. This may almost be called another form of ignorance, since, if you do not think what you are doing, and do not perceive its serious nature, or its consequences, you may be said for the moment to be ignorant of them—that is, the knowledge which you possess is not before your mind to guide you. It is part of the inherent weakness of human nature that even the best and wisest of men are liable to sin from want of thought. Sometimes this is the result of surprise, or a sudden impulse of passion—sometimes from the lethargy of the body, which weighs down the soul, as the Psalmist says: "My soul hath slumbered through weariness; strengthen me, Thou, in Thy words" (Ps. cxviii. 28). A rebellion against God must be a fully wilful act, and therefore sins committed without due deliberation cannot be mortal sins; they are sins, because greater care and watchfulness would have prevented them, but

they are not mortal, because human weakness has come in, in such a way as to prevent them from being a real act of rebellion.

The same is true of smallness of matter—that is, when the object of the sin is a very trifling matter in itself. It may be said that the smallness of the object is no excuse, and, indeed, that the trifling nature of the object for which we have broken the Commandments of God is an aggravation of the offence rather than an excuse ; that a theft of even the smallest thing is a theft just as much as if the object were greater, and is just as much forbidden. It is not so, however, in fact. The nature of a man is such, that after a certain point it is quite impossible for him to appreciate the importance of things. With God, all things, great and small, are, in a sense, equally great ; there is no great or small with Him who is infinite, but to man things that are very small lose their significance. Just as material objects must reach a certain size before his eyes can distinguish them, so, morally, things must have a certain degree of importance before his mind can appreciate its responsibilities about them.

Many offences, therefore, are excused from the guilt of mortal sin, because the mind cannot fully take in their importance, and it is possible to commit them without the slightest idea of rebelling against God. St. James tells us that "in many things we all offend"—(iii. 2)—and the wise man says : "The just man shall fall seven times" (Prov. xxiv. 16). With all the care that man can take, he is constantly offending; he is constantly led into sin by ignorance, or want of consideration, or by surprise, or by carelessness, in what he thinks trifles. Such sins are not necessarily a rebellion against God, but arise from the weakness of nature, which he cannot entirely control. They are sins, because in each case it is his duty to watch more carefully over himself, so as to avoid offence; but they are venial sins, because they are committed without any idea of seriously offending God or losing His favour.

For mortal sin, then, three conditions are necessary: you must have sufficient knowledge and opportunity for deliberation; it must be a fully wilful act, and the object must be something which strikes you as a matter of consequence, either for its own intrinsic importance, or for some other reason. Some evil is proposed to a man which he knows to be contrary to God's law: he feels that it is a serious matter, and one in which he runs the risk of losing the favour of God: he has time to think and weigh and choose—and then deliberately gratifies himself, and "prefers the creature before the Creator, who is

blessed for ever." In this case the sin plainly involves a rebellion against God, and is a mortal sin.

It is obvious that, generally speaking, no one can tell with certainty, what constitutes a mortal sin in another: since no one knows the exact amount of knowledge and deliberation with which the act was committed: nay, we cannot be sure about the nature of our own sins, since the acts of the mind are very subtle, and there is often a great deal more deliberation and malice than we allow ourselves to suppose: therefore it is that the Holy Scripture says: "There are just men and wise men, and their works are in the hand of God: and yet man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred" (Eccles. ix. 1.)

When, therefore, you are told that such an action is a mortal sin, it merely means that it is so, supposing it to be committed with all the dispositions necessary to make anything a mortal sin; or, in other words, that it is a thing sufficiently weighty in itself, according to the judgment of theologians, to be the subject matter of a mortal sin. Again, sometimes a thing may be called a venial sin, but it may be done with such disposition as to be mortal; if, for instance, you supposed some action to be grievously sinful, and yet did it deliberately, it would be a mortal sin, however trifling the thing was in itself, because your act would clearly involve a rebellion against God in what you believed a serious matter.

And now we must place before our minds the terrible consequences of mortal sin, and learn to think of it as the one great evil we have to dread. Mortal sin is a deliberate rebellion against God, and by it a man turns from God, and chooses evil instead of Him, by "worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever" (Rom. i. 25). If he is miserable enough to die with this choice unrevoked he cuts himself off for ever from all good; for "what participation hath justice with injustice, or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (II. Cor. vi. 14). By his own act he has chosen injustice, he has chosen darkness, and injustice and darkness must be his portion. By his rebellion he has taken part with the first rebels—the fallen angels—and made common cause with them, and, therefore, he has his portion in "everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." "And the angels who kept not their principality, but forsook their own habitation, He hath reserved unto darkness in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day" (St. Jude 6). By mortal sin a man takes his part with these fallen angels, and for him, as for them, the "storm of darkness is reserved for ever." Rebellion blots out those who are guilty of it from that book of life of which it is

written: "And whatsoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire" (Ap. xx. 15); "their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched" (Isaias lxvi. 24).

It is a fearful, but necessary, thing to meditate upon these terrible judgments. Men are so heedless and self-willed that, in spite of all warnings, they will persist in making light of mortal sin, and in being easy and self-satisfied even when they are defying their Creator. Have we not done it ourselves?—have we never spoken as if a few sins mattered but little—as if we needn't fear to go on in sin for a while? It will be well, indeed, for us if we can say that we ourselves have never been guilty of the recklessness of God's anger, which we so often see around us. It is in vain that the Holy Scriptures tells us that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God"—(Heb. x. 31)—that "the Lord thy God is a consuming fire"—that "thy justice is as the mountains of God, and thy judgments are a great abyss" (Ps. xxxv. 7). In defiance of all warning, people go on imagining that the Infinite God is one like to themselves, whose commands they may despise with impunity. They go on abusing His patience, and rebelling against Him; but "He is patient, because He is eternal," and, in the day of His anger, "He shows might in His arm, and scatters the proud in the conceit of their heart" (St. Luke i. 51). To him that is little, mercy is granted; but the mighty shall be mightily tormented. For God will not except any man's person, neither will He stand in awe of any man's greatness" (Wisdom vi. 7).

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God." He is infinite in all His attributes; infinite in His goodness and mercy, and also infinite in His power and the severity of His justice. Wherever the creature comes in collision with the immensity of his Creator it must "grind him to powder." Let us listen to the voice of the rich man in his torments: "And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame" (St. Luke xvi. 23). What now to him are all the enjoyments of his life? "I did but taste a drop of honey, and behold I die." The pleasures of sense were but that one drop of honey which brought death with it; the creatures which were preferred to God have all turned to dust and ashes, no matter how great and splendid they once appeared. Now that God Himself has appeared, all creatures "are before Him, as if they had no being at all, and are counted

to Him as nothing" (Isaias xl. 17). So it has appeared to those who have gone before us, and so it will one day appear to us. Let us not, then, be deluded by the objects the world presents as temptations, even if it should show us all "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." They, too, in turn will pass away, and may leave us to that despairing cry: "I did but taste one drop of honey, and behold I die."

The essential punishment of mortal sin is the loss of God, and the knowledge that we have lost Him by our own fault; it is not so much that He has withdrawn Himself, as that we have rejected Him. In this life our vision is dazzled by the objects of sense around us, and we do not see that God is absolutely necessary for us, and that He is our Supreme God, without whom we cannot possibly be happy. We do not know fully, therefore, what we are doing when we reject Him, and it is in this that our trial consists; without this partial darkness there could be no state of probation. In this life we can shut our eyes to God, and our thoughts stray away only too easily after every passing creature; but when once this darkness is removed, and we have seen Him as He is, we can never more forget Him. "We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face. Now, I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known" (I. Cor. xiii. 12). The thought of Him, and of His beauty and glory, will pursue us for all eternity, for our joy or for our sorrow, as we ourselves have made it.

How great will be the misery of a Christian soul that has lost God for ever!—always drawn to Him who was its last end!—always driven back upon itself, and what it has chosen for itself!—always dwelling upon that despairing thought: I have lost God for ever, and lost Him by my own fault! I might have been saved, and I am lost for all eternity! With what agony will such a soul look back to the moments of grace—to an innocent and holy childhood—to a fervent first Communion, perhaps—to a thousand graces and blessings, all now "made void"—to a thousand warnings, all disregarded! And then that one mortal sin, which was, perhaps, the turning-point of that soul's career—which was the final rejection of God's grace, and led direct to its reprobation. How clear will all these things then be! We, too, my dear brethren, have had, and are now having, our seasons of grace: we can think of many times when God's grace has touched our hearts, and He still continues day after day to speak to us: how will these things look to us through all eternity? Will they be our joy and thankfulness, or our torment? We know that it depends upon the use we now make of our present opportunities. "To-day if you shall hear

His voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. xciv. 8); or you may turn that loving voice which now speaks to you into a bitter and unavailing regret for all eternity.

To conclude, let us dwell on the thought with which we started: salvation depends on one question—when we die, are we the friends or the enemies of God? We must be one or the other. Are we in sanctifying grace, or in mortal sin? By the help of God we can be in a state of grace if we will; no one can take away from us the wedding garment in which we have been clothed; no one can extinguish the burning light given to us to hold at our baptism, if we choose to keep it; we can never lose God's friendship by inadvertence, or by accident, since it must be by our own free and deliberate act that we rebel against our God. If we are ever tempted to mortal sin, let us weigh well the consequences, and remember that, by one mortal sin, we may lose God for all eternity.

SERMON XXIII.

Daily Faults.

"Be at agreement with thine adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him" (St. Matt. v. 25).

WHEN God calls us to account, my dear brethren, His judgment will not only be righteous and severe, but it will be most searching and accurate. He will pass over nothing. Things that seem trivial in men's eyes, for good or for evil, will be accurately weighed in His balance. "Thou has ordered all things in measure, number, and weight" (Wisd. xi. 21). God has "weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance"—(Is. xl. 12),—and has, at the same time, ordered, "in measure, number, and weight" even the smallest of the insects that sport in the sunshine; so He takes an account of the deeds of men, both great things and small. "Are not these things stored up with Me, and sealed up in My treasures?" (Deut. xxxii. 34). The Master takes an account of all His servants, whether much or little has been committed to them; He reckons just as accurately with him that has received but one talent as with him to whom five have been committed. "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then will He render to every man according to His works" (St. Matt. xvi. 27). "Therefore every one of us shall render account to God for himself" (Rom. xiv. 12). "For there is no respect of persons with God. For whosoever have sinned without the law, shall perish without the law; and whosoever have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law" (Rom. ii. 12).

"The fire shall try every one's work, of what sort it is (I. Cor. iii. 13). God's judgment will not be contented with exterior show, but will search the work of man, and find out every flaw and imperfection that there is in it; and, moreover, everything that is wanted to its completeness. "I find not thy works full before my God" (Apoc. iii. 2). Thoughts, words, and works will all be subject to this minute examination, and not even a passing word will escape unexamined; for "I say to you that every idle word that men shall speak they shall render an account of it in the day of judgment; for, by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (St. Matt. xii. 36).

If God so judges, it is plain that men must not dare to make

light of trifles; but that each one is bound to guard himself as much as possible even against the smallest violation of God's law. "Thou hast commanded that Thy commandments be kept most diligently"—(Ps. cxviii. 4)—and there is no safety but in using the greatest diligence in the observance of them.

When we are considering the awful guilt and consequences of sin, which involves a rebellion and treason against God, and, perhaps, also, an eternal separation from Him, we are hardly able to think of any lesser guilt, just as when we have been gazing at the lightning's flash we can hardly see the light of an ordinary flame; but sin of any kind is, in itself, a terrible evil.

Venial sin is, as I have said, a sin which is only saved from being a rebellion against God by the weakness and imperfection of human nature; but it is, in itself, of the same nature as mortal sin: it is an offence against a God who is infinitely holy, and cannot endure iniquity. "Thou art not a God that willest iniquity. Neither shall the wicked dwell near Thee, nor the unjust abide before Thine eyes; Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity" (Ps. v. 5). It is never lawful to commit a sin of any kind, however small it may be, for any purpose whatever. It is no excuse to say that it was done with a good end, to avoid evil or obtain good either for ourselves or for others, no matter how great the evil to be avoided or the good to be obtained may appear to be. Our first duty as creatures is not to offend our Creator and break His Commandments. People sometimes say that they were obliged by circumstances to do something wrong; that they could not help it, and so forth. This, however, is not the case. We can never be compelled to do wrong, or justified in doing it. It is true that circumstances often change the nature of an action. Some commandments do not bind in cases of great necessity, so that, what would otherwise be wrong, becomes right in the particular circumstances; but if an action is really and necessarily sinful, it may not be done for any cause whatever.

Venial sin is a great danger on account of the multitude of sins which those who are careless about it commit. "How much more is a man abominable and unprofitable who drinketh iniquity like water" (Job xv. 16). A man who has habits of venial sin, which he does not take pains to avoid, may be said to "drink iniquity like water." It is so quickly and so easily committed: thoughts, words, and actions; the duties we owe to God, and the duties we owe to our neighbours; what we do, and what we leave undone; all combine in presenting to us occasions of sin if we are not walking circumspectly. Offences are very easily committed, and are past in a moment, but one day they

will appear against us. This life, we know, is the seed-time of eternity, and everything that we do is a seed cast into the ground to bear some fruit in eternity. We cast the grains upon the earth and they disappear, but we shall find them again at the hour of death. The thought which crosses the mind, the word that comes forth from the lips, the action which is finished almost as soon as begun—have all gone out into eternity, and, in a sense, have become eternal and immutable. We do actions in a moment which ages will not destroy. A man yields to temptation—it is for eternity: he does a good deed or utters a fervent prayer—it is for eternity. The sin, the pleasure of which passes in a moment, if it is not washed away by penance, or cannot be atoned for by punishment, remains, for ever attached to the soul of the sinner for his torment and misery—and, on the other hand, every act of justice or charity, or piety which I do, may procure for me an increase of happiness for all eternity. Oh, my dear brethren, if we could only realize the consequences of all that we now do, how differently we should all act!

We may, however, distinguish two very different sorts of venial sin: the sin which necessarily comes from the weakness of human nature, and the sin which is either a deliberate disregard of small things, or is the result of culpable negligence. No man can keep out of all venial sin without a special grace. He may, indeed, avoid any particular sin, but he cannot go on for any long time without offending in something: "for in many things we all offend," and "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (St. James iii. 2; I. St. John i. 8).

The greatest saints all committed some sin, and it is impossible for us to avoid it. The Church declares it to be a matter of faith that no one, except by a special privilege, such as was granted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, can avoid all sin, even venial sin in the course of his life" (Council of Trent, Sess. 6, Can. 23). Such sins are like the almost imperceptible dust which falls on a polished surface; if allowed to accumulate it soon becomes a serious disfigurement; but, if carefully and regularly removed, it leaves no stain behind it. Sin of this kind belongs to the imperfect nature of mortal man, and God allows it to remaiu, even in the greatest saints, to be a constant humiliation, and spur to exertion, "for virtue is made perfect in infirmity" (II. Cor. xii. 9). The sins into which the saints fell only made them more humble, and more dependent upon God, since their falls showed them how weak they were, and how great was the necessity of being watchful and constantly relying upon God's

grace. They washed away these imperfections by daily tears, and by that constant spirit of Penance which is almost an essential quality of earthly sanctity; they entered daily by prayer and meditation into the Divine Presence, and so were thoroughly cleansed each day from the unavoidable frailties of their human nature.

The Prophet Isaias found himself in the presence of the Most High God, and heard the seraphim crying out one to another: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of Hosts, all the earth is full of His glory," and he said: "Woe is me, because I have held my peace: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people that hath unclean lips, and I have seen with my eyes the King, the Lord of Hosts. And one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a live coal which he had taken with the tongs off the altar, and he touched my mouth, and said, Behold, this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquities shall be taken away, and thy sin shall be cleansed" (Isaias vi. 3). The exercise of the presence of God was to the saints the burning fire by which the sins resulting from human frailty were taken away.

Very different from these are the venial sins which men in general commit. They sin venially indeed, but it is not merely from the weakness of human nature, but because they do not care much about being perfect—perhaps do not even *wish* to be much better then they are—because they make light of small things, and are not at all sensitive as to the evil of offending God, so that they are slothful and supine in his service. Very often venial sins are committed with great deliberation, and show a fearful amount of malice and coldness of heart. You find people who, so long as they think they can escape the terrible penalties of mortal sin, and, as they think, keep out of the danger of eternal damnation, do not seem to care how much they offend God.

Such people do not make any attempt to break off habits of sin, which they know to be displeasing to God; they go on, day after day, for years, perhaps, committing the same faults, and hardly even think of making a serious effort to overcome the habit. They console themselves by trying to persuade their consciences that there is nothing very serious in what they do, and that, perhaps, some day or other they will set about doing better, but in the meantime they keep on offending God perpetually. For instance, men will go on in the habit of little lies, trifling excuses, or petty vanities, and taking part in small deceits and dishonesties, or they will indulge themselves in unkind talk about their neighbours, or they will constantly be irreverent and indevout in their behaviour to Almighty God, and

neglect His service; or they will give way to self-indulgence, and to petty malice, and be obstinate and wrong-headed in a thousand ways, so that it may be said of them: *Semper hi errant corde*—they are always wrong in heart.

Let us consider the very serious nature of such venial sins as these. In the first place, is it so sure that they are always venial? The habit of mind which leads people to act in this selfish, ungenerous way very easily makes them go a little farther, and then conceals from them what they have done. Can conscience be expected to be very delicate and discriminating when you are acting up to it so very little? If you go on in this way, you cannot have much of that "fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom." What! really fear God, and go on treating Him so! "*Confige timore tuo carnes meas*"—"Pierce through my flesh with Thy fear" (Ps. cxviii. 120). It would be impossible for any one whose heart was really pierced through with the holy fear of God to go on sinning in this deliberate, heartless manner.

Even if such a sinner never mistakes between mortal and venial sin, he is in great danger of being led away much further than he intended, and so crossing the fatal line. Every sin he commits makes him so much weaker, and decreases in some degree the grace of God within him; the very tone of mind in which he lives must almost dry up the source of grace within him, so that the barrier between him and destruction is constantly diminishing. "He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little" (Ecclus. xix. 1). A ship founders at sea; it is because the water has entered by degrees till it could no longer float, and if the smallest leak were entirely neglected the shipwreck would certainly follow; a house falls, but every one knows that the fall has been prepared for a long time by the gradual decay and destruction of the walls and timbers; so, when a man falls into crime, it is generally a result which is but the termination of a long course of negligence about small things. The complete turning away from God is but the natural result of a system of coldness and indifference in His service.

Neglected venial sin, therefore, is a terrible danger, for, as the Catechism says, "it displeases God, and often leads to mortal sin." But, even independently of this danger, it is a great evil, because by it we contract a great debt to the justice of God, which some day we shall have to pay. God will render to every man according to his works, and for every sin that a man commits some punishment is due; who, then, can tell how great will be the punishment laid up for him who has gone on all his life "storing up wrath against the last days?" (St. James v. 3).

Our Lord says: "Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes,

whilst thou art in the way with him; lest, perhaps, the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing" (St. Matt. v. 25). Now, a man who is really careless about venial sin not only keeps on, day after day, adding to his debt, but he is in such a state that he can hardly do anything in satisfaction of it. As I have said, men cannot altogether help falling into venial sin; but, then, on the other hand, they are able easily to obtain pardon, and to escape from the liability which they have incurred by it. Our Lord has left in our hands all the treasures of His Passion for the payment of our debt, and His Precious Blood is infinitely more than enough to wash away all the sins of men, and pay all their debts. But, then, it is necessary that we should do something ourselves to obtain the benefit of the pardon purchased for us.

To obtain the pardon of our sins two things are necessary: first, to be in such dispositions as to render pardon possible; and, secondly, to use the means our Lord has appointed for conferring pardon—that is, by which the merits of His Precious Blood may be applied to wash away sin. The conditions which render the pardon of actual sin possible are, sorrow for the sins already committed, and a real purpose of amendment. In this respect mortal and venial sin are alike—and we cannot conceive that God will pardon any sin, great or small, without some repentance for the past, and a will to avoid sin for the future

In addition to these dispositions, our Lord has appointed a Sacrament for the forgiveness of sin, which is the proper, and, where it can be applied, the necessary means for the remission of mortal sin. He has put all mortal sin under the "power of the keys," when He says: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained." All mortal sins, therefore, unless from accidental circumstances, must be forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance; but venial sin can be forgiven much more easily. It is, indeed, the matter of confession: if you confess the venial sins you have committed, with proper repentance and purpose of amendment, and receive absolution, it is without doubt the best way of obtaining pardon. You are not, however, obliged to confess venial sins, and there are a great many other ways in which they may be washed away. A good act of contrition, such as you ought to say with your prayers—or any good work which you do, or any fervent act of charity to God, is sufficient, through the merits of Christ, to obtain pardon of the venial sins. "Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much"—and if we love

much we shall easily wash away our sins, however many they may be.

The question then arises as to how it is that, when so many facilities for the pardon of sin are provided, people can go on all their lives adding to their debt and never cancelling any part of it? The answer is a very simple one: it is because, with regard to venial sin, a great number of people are so disposed that pardon is impossible. They are *not* sorry for them in any real sense: that is, they may be annoyed to find themselves doing the same things over and over again, but they are not sufficiently displeased with their sins to take any trouble to get rid of them. Have they any purpose of amendment? Such a purpose means not merely saying: I want to be better, and I intend never to do these things again; but it means a will to take the steps necessary for keeping out of them in future. A large number of people have not any such will, and therefore have not the necessary purpose of amendment.

This being the case, they spend their whole lives in the same state—going to confession from time to time, and making most fervent acts of contrition; but their venial sins are never forgiven. Their purposes of amendment are most sweeping, as far as words go; but there is a kind of secret understanding with the enemy that these pet failings are not included, and therefore they are not forgiven.

This seems a very bad case, and yet it is very common with us all. How many years, my dear brethren, have you known that you were subject to certain failings—faults of temper, sins of omission, and so forth? Have you ever really set about overcoming them? How many such faults have you eradicated?—or, if that seems too much to ask, how many have you seriously attempted to get rid of? No doubt, you mention them when you go to confession; but you live on with them, all the same, and they seem quite safe from all the acts of contrition and good resolution you make every day. And yet there is very little doubt, if you really tried for one month to get rid of a particular habit, you could overcome it in great part, if not entirely. Can you expect our Lord to accept such sorrow and purpose of amendment, and to forgive you the sins which you keep on cherishing in this manner?

In addition to the guilt of sin, there is a debt due to the justice of God; but we cannot pay our debt till the guilt itself has been wiped out. St. Paul says: "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that were wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church" (Col. i. 24). In what sense is anything wanting in the sufferings of

Christ? Nothing, as far as their supreme efficacy is concerned, since the value of all we can do is from them, for "all our sufficiency" is from Him; but something is wanted on our part, that we may dispose ourselves to receive His grace, and may take the share of satisfaction which God's justice requires from us personally.

Even when the guilt of sin has been forgiven, the justice of God generally requires that something shall be done by the sinner as a satisfaction and atonement. It is not that God delights in our suffering, but it is the fire that purifies the works of men. "Every man's work shall be manifest, for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved yet so as by fire" (I. Cor. iii. 13). We have an illustration of the dealings of God with sinners in the case of King David, when we committed a great sin; he repented of his sin and bewailed it most bitterly; but something more was required. "And Nathan said to David, The Lord also hath taken away thy sin: thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme for this thing, the child that is born to thee shall surely die" (II. Kings xii. 13).

In some way or other, sin has to be atoned for, and something will be asked, even of those who repent, in addition to what our Lord has done for us all. This atonement may be made in many ways, as God will accept almost anything that we offer in this life in Christ's name and for His sake: it may be made by patient suffering, or by acts of love and devotion. Again, our atonement may be in this world, or in the world to come—since, as our Lord tells us, we may "be at agreement with our adversary betimes whilst we are in the way with him;" whereas, if we neglect this, the atonement must be made by being cast into prison, "until we pay the last farthing."

This naturally leads us to the subject of purgatory. There are numbers who make no sort of atonement in this life for the sins they commit. Sometimes it pleases God to send us crosses and sufferings which may serve as the fitting punishment of sin, but sometimes He does not do so. Moreover, the pains and troubles of life are, only too frequently, borne in such a manner as to increase the debt which we owe to God, instead of diminishing it; or it may be that people are so much wedded to sin, or so careless about it, that they cannot even begin to make an atonement for it. It is clear, then, that if God is to render to

every one according to his works, it must be in most cases when this life is over, and the time of trial is finished.

The Catechism tells us that purgatory is a "place where souls suffer for a time on account of their sins," and that "those souls go to purgatory that depart this life in venial sin, or that have not fully paid the debt of temporal punishment due to those sins of which the guilt has been forgiven." For two reasons, then, we may go to purgatory—on account of the many sins of carelessness and weakness which we now commit, for which we never sufficiently repent, and which we take little pains to avoid or atone for; and to satisfy God for great sins for which we have repented. We have repented, and 'the Lord has taken away the sin for Christ's sake, and we shall not die," but justice has in no way been satisfied for the evil that we have done. It is beautifully expressed in the words of Cardinal Newman's hymn, in which he speaks of the souls of the faithful departed:

> "For daily falls, for pardoned crime,
> They joy to undergo
> The shadow of Thy cross sublime,
> The remnant of Thy woe."

Let us conclude our consideration of venial sin by thinking of the state of the souls of the faithful in purgatory. They are called, in the language of the Church, "the holy souls," because they have departed this life in the grace and favour of God. They have been judged and accepted by Him, and will be happy with Him for ever: they have seen God face to face, and, from that moment, all affection to sin has for ever disappeared, and they love God with a love that men on earth cannot conceive; and yet they have to suffer till they have "paid the last farthing." They suffer with the greatest patience, and lovingly bear all that God's justice has decreed to make them fit for that kingdom to which nothing defiled can enter. And yet, in spite of their holiness and patience, the severity and duration of their punishment, we have every reason to believe, are very terrible. The time for mercy is past for them, and the time for justice is come, and all their love, and all their patience, are unavailing to soften the severity of this justice—they must now "pay the last farthing."

Nothing can give us a more vivid idea of the evil of venial sin than the thought of these holy souls, suffering in hope deferred, till they have drunk the chalice drop by drop, and atoned for every idle word, "letting the fire wear out their stains and worshipping God's purity."

What would those holy souls say about the evil of venial sin?

Would they not tell us that no pains can be too great to avoid venial sin, and to atone for those offences into which human frailty has led us?

"Help, Lord, the souls which Thou hast made
The souls to Thee so dear,
In prison for the debt unpaid
Of sins committed here.

Those holy souls, they suffer on,
Resigned in heart and will,
Until Thy high behest is done,
And justice has its fill."

—*Cardinal Newman.*

SERMON XXIV.

The Witness to Christ.

"You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8).

OUR Lord chose out His twelve Apostles, and made them His special companions and friends. They were to be the first priests, through whom a Christian priesthood, with the character and power of order, was to be established on earth, and they were to be the channels by which sacramental grace was to be distributed amongst men. But, my dear brethren, they were to have another office quite distinct from this, and it was for this office specially that they were separated from their brethren and formed into a college, or company, or corporate body. They were to be the permanent witness to our Lord, not only for the few years that they were to remain on earth, and for the countries they could visit personally, but for all ages and for the whole world. To bear witness to our Lord personally, they needed no particular office or organization; every one who had seen and heard Jesus in the flesh would be a witness in this way; but they were to be witnesses to all nations: "Going, therefore, teach all nations," and their witness was to continue till the end of time. "I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world" (St. Matt. xxviii. 20).

To enable the Apostles to be witnesses to Him through all time, our Lord formed them into a corporate body, which was to continue to exist when the original members were removed by death. When Judas fell away, the Apostles chose St. Matthias to take his place, and, as the Church grew, other members were taken into its body, not, indeed, with the special privileges of the Apostles, but to form part of that great teaching society which was to be a permanent witness to the truths our Lord had come to teach.

St. Paul says to his disciple, St. Timothy: "Hold the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and in the love which is in Christ Jesus. Keep the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us" (II. Tim. i. 13). Without some special institution for the purpose it would have been impossible for men to keep this "form of sound words" about our Lord and His doctrine. Christ might, indeed, have provided a witness to Himself in other ways, but what He,

in fact, did was to make the Apostles, and those who succeeded them in their office, witnesses "even to the uttermost part of the earth."

The ninth article of the Creed is "the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints," and this is a subject which requires careful consideration. It is most important that all Catholics should understand the doctrine of the authority of the Church, and the principles on which it is founded, and it is particularly necessary in our own time and country. The Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I. Tim. iii. 15), and from it alone can any certain knowledge of faith be obtained. This is not wonderful; it is not likely that any one can learn the faith, except by the mode of teaching which our Lord instituted—that is, by the teaching and authority of the Apostles and their successors. If you take away this foundation appointed by Christ, faith becomes a mere changing, floating opinion—a house built upon a quicksand. In such a case people may, indeed, have opinions, but, in general, they can have no reasonable ground of certainty as to their being right.

This is only too well illustrated by the ever-changing varieties of opinion held by those out of the Church. In every direction we find good and intelligent people "tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine," and utterly unable to agree as to the elementary doctrines of the Christian faith.

St. Peter says that you are to be "ready always to satisfy every one that asketh you a reason for that hope which is in you" (I. St. Peter iii. 15). But those out of the Church are unable to give any such reason. They can say that they think their opinions right; but, if you would ask what authority they have for these opinions, and how they come to know that they are right, and their neighbours wrong, they have nothing whatever to say. These are their views because they *are* their views, but, commonly speaking, they hardly even profess to have any reliable authority, or any logical ground for believing them.

It is most important, then, for all Catholics to be well instructed in the principle of their faith, and to see clearly that they differ from those outside the Church, not in mere matters of detail, but in the very foundation on which their faith is built. If they do not understand this fully, they can have no intellectual hold on the faith, and their religion is like the house built on the sand: "the rains came, and winds blew, and the house fell, because it had no foundation;" and so their faith will fall if ever perplexities or difficulties should come upon them.

The "Catholic Church" is used in two senses. It may mean all the faithful of Christ throughout the universe, or it may mean

the visible part of that Universal Church, the Church militant on earth. In its widest sense it is made up of three parts: the Church triumphant in heaven, the Church militant on earth, and the Church suffering in purgatory. It contains the countless legions of angels, rising rank above rank, around the throne of God, angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, principalities and powers, by their beauty and variety reflecting in some faint degree the infinite beauty and grandeur of their Creator; it contains the rich and varied companies of saints whom this earth has sent to join that blessed society, and above and beyond all in beauty and glory is that peerless Mother of God, whose divine maternity has crowned her Queen of them all.

> See! forth from the gates, like a bridal array,
> Come the princes of heaven—how bravely they shine!
> There are millions of saints in their ranks and degrees,
> And each with a beauty and crown of his own.
> And there, far outnumbering the sands of the seas,
> The nine rings of angels encircle the throne.

—*Father Faber.*

Next to the Church triumphant comes the Church militant on earth. It includes, as actual members, all who have become its members by Baptism, and have not, by their own act, cut themselves off from its communion, and, as possible members, every human being on earth. It is like that great "multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues,' which St. John saw "standing before the throne in the sight of the Lamb" (Apoc. vii. 9). It is, indeed, the earthly counterpart of that blessed crowd, and day by day, hour by hour, men, women, and children of all "nations and tribes and peoples and tongues" go forth to swell the numbers of that countless host.

And, last, there is the kingdom of the holy souls, the Church suffering, in which the "spouses of Christ," who have been redeemed by His Blood, are waiting patiently till their time of banishment is over.

These three parts, different as they are in condition, are but one Church, united together by the closest of bonds, and specially united by being under One Head. "The Head of the Catholic Church," the Catechism tells us, "is Jesus Christ our Lord."

Our Lord, in His human nature, is the Head of the whole Church, and every individual of that Church is united to Him, as the member is to its head—since He "is the image of the Invisible God, the first-born of every creature: For in Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible; whether thrones or dominations, or principalities or powers, all things were created by Him and in Him, and He is before all

and by Him all things consist, and He is the Head of the body of the Church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things He may hold the primacy" (Col. i. 15).

Jesus, God and Man, is the Supreme Head, whom the Father has placed over all His children, "setting Him on His right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality, and power, and virtue, and domination, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And he hath subjected all things under His feet, and hath made Him head over all the Church, which is His body and the fulness of Him who is filled, all in all" (Eph. i. 20).

To the Church in Heaven He is present in His beauty and glory, filling all hearts with joy by the very sight of Him: He is in the midst of the Church on earth, fighting our battles for us and with us, succouring us in time of need, giving courage to the weak and binding up the wounded: He cheers us by His constant Sacramental Presence, and His voice is ever heard in the midst of us, as that of the captain encouraging his soldiers. He is with the suffering souls of the faithful departed —concealing, indeed, His face from them for a time—but still, their only hope—their "refreshment, light, and peace."

It is now time to speak of the Catholic Church in its other sense, that is, as meaning only the visible Church on earth—and this is the sense in which the words are commonly used. What is this Catholic Church? What is its definition, and its essence? It is strange how seldom we can get an answer to this question. We hear about the Church, and Church principles in every direction, and we hear people calling themselves Catholics and professing to be members of the Catholic Church, but out of the Communion of the Roman Church, you cannot get an answer to the simple question: What is the Church? It is not merely that people answer this question incorrectly, but they will not answer it at all: that is, they have grand general and vague ideas, but they cannot make up their minds exactly what they mean by them.

Let us begin by some negations, then, and say what the Church is *not:* it is not a mere collection of individuals, however good, but it is an organized body; "and He gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowled of the Son of God . . . . that we may grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being com-

pacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in charity" (Eph. iv. 10).

It is, then, a structure built up—made of many parts differing in themselves, all supplying something, each contributing in its own way to some common end—that is, it is a carefully organized body of living men. It is not a body containing the righteous only, since our Lord carefully explains to us that His Church on earth shall include both good and bad. It is the field containing wheat and cockle, which grow together, and cannot always be distinguished by the eyes of men. "Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and, in the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into the barn" (St. Matt. xiii. 30).

So, again, our Lord compares the Church to a "net cast into the sea, and gathering together all kinds of fishes. Which, when it was filled, they drew out, and, sitting by the shore, they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth" (St. Matt. xiii. 47). About this St. Augustine says: "However, as touching the net cast into the sea, and enclosing a great multitude of fishes, both bad and good, we may well understand that by the bad are meant Catholics of bad lives. For the sea is one thing whereby we may understand to be signified the world, and the net another, which seemeth to signify our faith, or the communion of one Church. Between heretics and sinful Catholics there is this difference: that heretics believe a lie, and sinful Catholics believe the truth, but live not as they believe" *(Brev. Lesson, 5th Sunday after Epiphany).*

A Church, therefore, made up of devout people scattered about everywhere, and not in any visible manner united into one body, is obviously opposed to the idea of a Church presented to us by our Lord. The Church, moreover, is *not* a body of individuals connected together by the possession of valid Orders or sacramental graces. Our Lord, in His kindness and beneficence, has given to His Church both the grace of the Sacraments and the powers of the priesthood, but they were not *necessary* for the Church: that is, He might, if it had been His pleasure to do so, have established a Church in which there were neither Orders nor Sacraments. The Church might very well have existed without any of the special powers and graces given by Holy Orders; and, on the other hand, these powers will not make the Church. Instances may be found, without number, in which individuals and bodies of men, with the undoubted

possession of valid Orders, have clearly fallen away from the Christian Church.

What, then, is the Church? It is a visible corporate body established by our Lord to be the permanent witness to Him, and the constant teacher of His faith to men. It must be endowed, therefore, with all the qualifications necessary for carrying out this work, and it *need* not have any others. The Church, then, in the first place, must be visible and capable of identification. If you cannot find out which is your teacher, it is plain that his teaching is of no use—and an invisible and inaudible witness would clearly be able to teach nothing. The very first quality of the Church, then, is that it must be conspicuous. "You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid" (St. Matt. v. 14). Listen to the words in which the prophet Daniel describes the kingdon which Christ was to found: "Thus thou sawest, till a stone was cut out of a mountain, without hands, and it struck the statue upon the feet thereof, that were of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces . . . . but the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." The prophet goes on to describe the great empires that were to succeed each other upon earth, and then says: "But, in the days of those kingdoms, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, and His kingdom shall not be delivered up to another people, and it shall break in pieces, and shall consume all these kingdoms, and itself shall stand for ever" (Dan. ii. 34–44). The stone "cut out of the mountain without hands," which "became a mountain and filled the whole earth," corresponds exactly with the idea of a "city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid," and describes in the most forcible way, a visible and conspicuous Church, which cannot be missed by those who seek for it.

But, it is not enough for it to be visible for the moment. It must have a history, and be able to say who it is, and where it comes from. A witness must, in the first place, be able to give an account of himself and prove his identity; if he cannot do this satisfactorily, and show how he comes to know, and what right he has to speak, his evidence is of no value. So the Church must not only be visible now, but must be able to trace its history from the times as to which its testimony relates—that is, to our Lord's day.

Besides being conspicuous and unmistakable, to be a teacher and a witness, the Church must have power to speak, and authority to decide: "Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their wicked doings, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isaias lviii. 1). "Preach the Word:

be instant, in season out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine. For there shall come a time when they will not endure sound doctrine, but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears" (II. Tim. iv. 2). These words, which describe the duty of an individual Bishop in the midst of his flock, describe also what must be the office of the Church of God in the world. It must speak, it must bear witness: in season and out of season it must raise its voice amongst men. To do this, it must be a living body: that is, not only a body made up of living men, but a body having a moral life of its own, distinct from that of its individual members. This life, moreover, must be accompanied by such an organization as to enable it to make itself heard; otherwise, it is plain that it cannot fulfil the purpose for which our Lord established it on earth. It must be heard, too; not in an occasional and intermittent way, but regularly, and whenever its witness is required. If ever the time could come when it ceased to be able to bear witness and to teach, it would cease to exist—because the essential office of the Church, which our Lord established upon earth, is to be witness to Him, "even to the uttermost parts of the earth," and to teach all nations. "Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, behold, I am with you all days to the consummation of the world" (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). Plainly, teaching is the one great work for which our Lord sent out His Apostles and established the Church; and therefore the Church must be the divinely-appointed teacher of men, or it is nothing at all, and can claim no reason of existence upon earth. On the other hand, as it is the teacher appointed by God, all men are bound to hear, and there can be only one excuse for disobedience. If, at the Day of Judgment, when the secrets of all hearts are laid bare, and all veils are removed, a man can plead that he did not know the Church, and was unable to find her out and recognize her, he may clear himself from the guilt of rebellion; but no other excuse will avail him. It is not a matter of liking or disliking, but of the submission which a creature owes to its Creator.

"As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you"—"All power is given to Me in heaven and upon earth." What wider commission could He have given? "As the Father hath sent Me"—listen to the voice of the Eternal Father: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him." Our Lord sends forth His Church with the full power and authority which

belongs to Himself, and identifies Himself, as it were, with those whom He has commissioned to teach in His name: "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me. And he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me" (St. Luke x. 16).

To obey the Church in all things which concern the salvation of our souls is, then, one of the most imperative of all our obligations. If you reverence and obey the pastors of the Church in the performance of their office, it is not an obedience to men, but to God. You do not obey them for themselves, or for any qualities they may possess, but simply as the organs appointed by God, through whom his will is made known to you: "Obey your prelates, and be subject to them: for they watch as being to render an account of your souls" (Heb. xiii. 17). On the other hand, disobedience to the authority of the Church is disobedience to God.

"They have not rejected thee, but Me, that I should not reign over them" (I. Kings viii. 7). This was what Almighty God said to Samuel when the children of Israel came to him, with many specious pretexts and grievances, to demand a King: so with those who are rebellious against the authority of the Church —it is generally against God Himself that the rebellion is directed.

Obedience to the teaching of the Church is the one rule of faith to all men. It is not merely for the poor and ignorant, but for rich and poor, learned and ignorant, clergy and laity alike. It is, indeed, the great and the learned to whom the spirit of obedience is most necessary, as they are in the greatest danger of being carried away into error, and most need a guide appointed by Heaven. All that we know of our faith comes to us on the authority of the Church. She is the guide whom we follow over all ways, plain and difficult alike. In some things we fancy we can see our own way easily enough by our own powers, but in the easy places, as well as the difficult, it is on the authority of our guide, and not on our own judgment, that we must really rest. The ultimate reason for our faith is that God has taught us by His Holy Church. We may have a thousand other arguments to convince us of any truth, but the real ground for believing it must be, not our own reason, but the authority of God speaking to us in His Church.

This authority, moreover, is always a *present* authority. It is the living voice of the Church of our own day, not the records of past history, that we have to listen to. When people speak of the authority of the Church of ages gone by they are not really going by authority, which, of its own nature, is a living thing,

but by their own judgment on a dead letter, which cannot speak for itself.

This, then, is the essence of the Catholic Church: to be the divinely-appointed witness and teacher of God's truth upon earth. Those who, by God's mercy, have obtained a knowledge of this divine guide, have received an immense spiritual advantage; they alone have a clear knowledge of the truth, and they alone can really be united in one faith. Without this divine guidance, each man can only have an opinion of his own in spiritual matters; but we have one faith, since we all accept the whole teaching of this one Church, and to us alone are opened the special springs of grace which our Lord has instituted in His Church.

And now let us ask: What are we doing to correspond with this grace which has been bestowed upon us? We certainly shall be judged by our conduct as Catholics, and according to the use we have made of the special advantages with which we have been favoured.

But, first, let us consider how great ought to be our gratitude to our Lord for making us members of His Church; it is not for any merit of our own, but simply out of the abundance of His own goodness that He has done so—and we know well that there are thousands more deserving than ourselves whom He allows to wander outside His fold.

"To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but to them that are without, all things are done in parables" (St. Mark iv. 11).

Our Lord has founded a Church, which He built up by His Passion and "purchased with His own Blood," and filled with His Spirit: this Church he has preserved through all ages by His special providence; and all this that it might speak to you of Him. He would give to you a clear and plain account of His own divine Person and of His doctrine, and therefore He called you to be a member of His Church. Our Lord has called you to be one of His sheep, that you might hear His voice plainly, and not in parables: "The sheep hear His voice, and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when He hath let out His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him because they know His voice" (St. John x. 3). Do not these words give a most accurate description of the spiritual blessings you have received as members of the Catholic Church? Now, why did our Lord give you this special knowledge? "Amen, I say to you, that many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them: and to hear the things that you hear, and have not

heard them" (St. Matt. xiii. 17). What is expected of you in return for this "excellent knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. iii. 8).

It would be well, my dear brethren, if we all thought more of the responsibilities which we have as Catholics. Our Lord expects that we should "hear His voice," not only by accurate knowledge, but by ready obedience: He expects that we should listen loyally and humbly to the teaching of His Church: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 3). But the Church is not only appointed to teach us, but has a right to command us in all things concerning the salvation of our souls. If we really appreciated, as we ought to do, the blessing of being members of the Church, we should be very careful in obeying all her precepts. A willing and exact observance of the commands of the Church is the best test of our obedience—and our Lord requires it of us in return for the grace of being members of the Church.

SERMON XXV.

The Foundation.

"Other foundation no man can lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus" (I. Cor. iii. 11).

THE Catholic Church, my dear brethren, is an organized body —that is, it is made up of various ranks and classes. It contains teachers and taught, rulers and ruled, superiors and subordinates of various ranks, and all these joined together, so as to constitute one moral body. St. Paul says in a text I have before quoted: "And He gave some apostles and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ . . . . that henceforth we may be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive; but doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him who is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body" (Eph. iv. 11).

The Church which is here described is a vast society, containing many different offices and characters, "Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and doctors," each one receiving of our Lord, and built up in Him, so that every joint supplies something, and, in some way, tends to the "perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ." It must have been such an organized society to have been able to exist through all these ages. The Church has seen every change and every calamity that could come upon human society. The Roman empire sank from grandeur to decay, and the civilized world was broken in pieces and founded anew. Almost every institution in the world was overwhelmed by hordes of barbarians, and yet the Church endured. Nothing could so endure but a living organization, able constantly to repair its losses, and spring up again as fast as it was trampled down.

The Church, then, is a living body—that is, it is a collection of human beings, possessing an organization that will enable it to speak and act as one body; and, moreover, with an inherent

vitality. It is not enough that it should be organized, but it must have an inward principle of life to hold it together, in spite of all the dissolving influences of the world around. External pressure, human laws and institutions, might keep it together for a time, in one country and state of society, but nothing but a deep-seated principle of life could preserve it through all ages, and throughout the world.

It is this vitality that gives to the Church its unchangeable nature. It is sometimes made a reproach to the Catholic Church that it never changes in its constitution and principles of action —it does not go with the times, or conform to the "spirit of the age," as people say. This is, however, contained in the very idea of the Church. A living, organized body cannot change— that is, it may be educated, it may grow and develope, and can accommodate itself, in a certain way, to the circumstances in which it is placed, but it cannot change its nature, or its principles of existence. External violence may destroy it, but can never alter the essential character of its being.

So it is with the Church; it received a certain constitution from our Lord, who established it; and what He made it, it must ever remain. It is not like a temporal kingdom, which can be revolutionized, and take, now one form of government, and by-and-by another, which can be monarchical to-day, and republican to-morrow, according to the will of men; but it must always continue to have the same character and form of government that our Lord first gave it. And what is its constitution? It is not a republic, or a limited monarchy, but it is "one fold and one Shepherd." It has one Supreme Shepherd in heaven, and one supreme ruler, to represent Him, upon earth. Our Lord takes to Himself the title of Shepherd, as that which best combines the idea of tenderness and care with that of supreme and absolute authority. He assumes this title for Himself in the most emphatic manner, and with equal emphasis bestows it upon His Apostles. "I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." "I am the Good Shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know Me." "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out: and when he hath let out his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice" (St. John x. 11, 14, 2).

Our Lord was the Good Shepherd, who gave His life for His sheep. He was to go before them and lead them; and their one duty was to hear His voice and follow Him. His office of

Shepherd He gave, in the most emphatic manner, to the Apostle whom He chose out to exercise His authority on earth. "When therefore they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith to Him: Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs. . . . . He saith to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said to Him the third time: Lovest thou Me? and he said to Him: Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He said to Him: Feed My sheep" (St. John xxi. 15). He was to be the shepherd of the whole flock, both lambs and sheep; he was to lead, to rule, and to teach the whole Church, young and old, pastors and people.

Again, our Lord was the foundation of His Church: He was "the stone which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner: whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be bruised, and upon whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder" (St. Luke xx. 17). He was the rock upon which the Church was built, and on no other foundation can it stand: "Other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus"—and the structure built up upon this foundation must be unchangeable, as He is. This office, too, He delegated to St. Peter, that, as he was to be the visible shepherd taking the place of the invisible Shepherd, the "Prince of Pastors," so he should be the visible foundation-stone, representing the eternal and invisible rock which was the head of the corner. "And I say to thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (St. Matt. xvi. 18).

This brings us to speak of the Pope as the head of the Church. The Catechism, after saying that our Lord is the Head of the Catholic Church, goes on: "The Church has a visible head on earth, the Bishop of Rome, who is the Vicar of Christ." "The Bishop of Rome is the head of the Church, because he is the successor of St. Peter, whom Christ appointed to be the head of the Church." Our Lord and the Pope are both called the "Head of the Church," but in a widely different sense. Our Lord is the Head of the whole Church, in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory; whereas the Pope is the head only of that part which is on earth—the Church Militant. Our Lord is Head of the Church by His own right, and the Pope is the head as our Lord's vicar—that is, as holding our Lord's place visibly upon earth. He rules, not by any right of his own, but by delegation from his Master: he has no independent authority, but exercises the authority of our Lord on earth, in

His name, and by His commission. And there is another and even wider distinction between them: our Lord is the Head of the Church in the sense that to the Church in general, and in particular to each individual soul, He is All in All: He is the only Mediator and Saviour of all; He is the Judge of all, of whose fulness all have received, who alone heals and sanctifies all; of whom all must spiritually be members; "and all drank the same spiritual drink, and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ" (I. Cor. x. 4). In these senses our Lord's Headship is incommunicable: He was Head of the Church in this way whilst He was on earth, and He is head, for ever and ever, in heaven, and no creature can share the office with Him. The Pope is head in one respect only—that is, that he has the office of visible shepherd, and foundation: he is the visible teacher and centre of authority. Whilst our Lord was upon earth, in addition to His eternal and invisible Headship, He exercised the office of Visible Teacher and Guide to His Apostles; but when He had withdrawn Himself and would no longer be visibly in the midst of them, since all communities must have some visible head, He made St. Peter, and his successors after him, the centre of union and authority upon earth. Our Lord, therefore, is Head of the Church in an unrestricted sense, and by His own right, whereas the Pope is its head only for the external purpose of being visible teacher and ruler in His place.

The Catechism says: "I know that Christ appointed St. Peter to be the head of the Church, because Christ said to him, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And to thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.'" These are the words in which our Lord conferred this great prerogative on St. Peter, and they are explained to us by the Catholic Church. The immediate way in which we know the office and authority of the Pope is by the teaching of the Catholic Church. The Church is the witness appointed by our Lord to teach us all truth, and must first teach us her own constitution and government, and it is from her voice, therefore, that we learn the power that our Lord has given to her visible head.

We know that our Lord appointed St. Peter, and his successors after him, to be His vicars and divinely-appointed rulers of His Church, by the constant usage and express teaching of the Church; but the texts quoted tell us when, and in what terms, our Lord gave this commission. He entrusted His authority to St. Peter in three very remarkable figures of speech: He made him the foundation of the house, the keeper of the keys, and the

shepherd of the flock, and, in addition to these figures, He gave him a direct and express commission which contained in it the very same power and authority which the figures implied.

Let us dwell upon these figures for a moment, my dear brethren, as they will best bring home to our minds the sort of authority which our Lord entrusted to the visible head of His Church. "On this rock I will build my Church." He made St. Peter the rock on which His *own* Church—"My Church"—was to be built—the very Church of which He was the foundation, and of which there could be "no other foundation than that which was laid, Christ Jesus." By these words He identifies Himself with St. Peter, and shows that it is in His strength and firmness that St. Peter is the rock. He compares His Church to a house, such as that He speaks of when He says, "And the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock" (St. Matt. vii. 25).

Now, let us see what office He gives to St. Peter by making him the foundation. The foundation of a house is the centre of union which keeps every part together. Either directly or indirectly, everything rests on the foundation, and nothing can be said to form a part of the house which does not in some way depend upon it. By this figure, then, my dear brethren, our Lord teaches us the absolute necessity of being united to the see of Peter.

To be a part of the Catholic Church, every Bishop must be in communion with the Pope; every priest, by the fact of his dependence on his Bishop, is in the same communion; and every individual Catholic is in communion with his own pastor, so that each one can show how he rests on the foundation our Lord has laid for His Church. The faith of the Church rests upon this foundation, and not only its faith, but its discipline. What most corresponds to the foundation of a house in a community of living men is clearly the central government. It is this which unites men into one body, and keeps them together, and it is this on which all order and discipline rests; with a strong government the society is at peace, whilst with a weak one it totters, like the house built on the sand. To correspond, therefore, with our Lord's simile, the Pope must be, as he is, the supreme authority over all parts of the Church.

Our Lord, moreover, makes him the bearer of the keys. "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (St. Matt. xvi. 19). Now, these words

may be taken in two senses: they may be understood literally of that sacramental power of forgiving and retaining sins, which our Lord gave to St. Peter, and also to the other Apostles, by which heaven is opened and closed in reality ; or they may be taken as signifying the supreme authority which our Lord conferred upon St. Peter alone.

The keys represent the royal dignity ; he is the ruler of the city who bears its keys, and when the city is taken by one more mighty, the keys are offered to the conqueror in token of submission. Just as our Lord is by right the foundation, so is He the true bearer of the keys, and it is His own office that He is entrusting to Peter in these words. Of our Lord the Prophet Isaias foretells : " I will lay the key of the House of David upon His shoulder, and He shall open, and none shall shut ; and He shall shut, and none shall open " (Isaias xxii. 22). In these words are foretold our Lord's royal authority ; the " key of the House of David," which was to be laid upon His shoulder, means the supreme power which belongs to Him. "All power is given to me in heaven and upon earth," and this power, as far as external rule goes, He delegated to St. Peter by making him the keeper of the keys.

The Church is a house and it is a city, but our Lord compares it also to a fold, of which He is the Shepherd : " And other sheep I have that are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd " (St. John x. 16). No comparison can more aptly describe the Catholic Church : the plain wall of demarcation which surrounds it, the door of the sheep-fold by which alone it can be entered, the privileges of the sheep who are there folded, and the tenderness of the shepherd who watches over it, all tell us what our Lord meant His Church to be. The title of the Good Shepherd, too, is the one in which Jesus most delights ; and, in its full sense, it is incommunicable. No one but our Lord can lay down His life for the salvation of the sheep. No one but He can say, " I know mine, and mine know Me." He alone is the Good Shepherd who " leaves the ninety-nine in the desert, and goes after that which was lost till He finds it, and when He has found it lays it upon His shoulder rejoicing," and can say, "Rejoice with Me, because I have found My sheep that was lost " (St. Luke xv. 4). All this belongs only to the power of God, and the most that any man can do is to be a humble instrument in God's hands. Nevertheless, our Lord gives even this, His favourite title, to St. Peter, in order to make it plain that he is to be the ruler of the Church. " Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these ; feed My lambs, feed My lambs, feed My sheep."

Let us consider how great is the authority contained in these words. In one sense, as I have said, our Lord alone must always be the shepherd of each soul ; but in another, He has entrusted His authority to St. Peter and the Bishops of Rome, his successors. He has appointed them over the entire fold, to feed the whole flock, and in this commission to feed is contained full and complete power to teach, to rule, and to lead. Every one who is a member of Christ's fold is, by that very fact, subjected to the authority of the appointed shepherd ; every teacher in that fold must be in subordination to his supreme teaching authority; and he who cuts himself off from the shepherd at once ceases to belong to the fold.

There is no place in the Church of God except for those who are in communion with him to whom our Lord has committed the supreme rule. As St. Jerome writes to Pope Damasus : " Following no chief but Christ, I am joined in communion with your Holiness—that is, with the Chair of Peter. Upon that rock I know that the Church is built. Whosoever eats the Lamb out of this house is profane. If any one be not in the ark of Noah he will perish whilst the deluge prevaileth " *(Faith of Catholics*, vol ii. p. 78). This was the faith of the Church in St. Jerome's time, twelve hundred years ago, and it is the faith of the Church now; to be in the fold of Christ you must be under the rule of the shepherd He has appointed.

It is not the Church that appoints him to be head; the house does not make its own foundation, nor do the sheep appoint their own shepherd. The master of the house lays the foundation, and the owner of the sheep appoints the shepherd to take care of them. All other powers in the Church are, in some way, the work of men, and are matters of arrangement and ecclesiastical law. Bishoprics are established, and their boundaries are marked out, as the Church grows. What was, in one century, a great and flourishing Christian Church, is but a wilderness in another. The sub-divisions of the flock, and the degrees of power which each pastor possesses, are in constant change ; provinces, dioceses, parishes are established and are changed, but before all these, and above them all, is the one ecclesiastical authority which Christ appointed. This alone cannot change ; it has received nothing from the Church, and the Church can take nothing from it.

And now there is one more word of our Lord's to consider. He had constituted the supreme authority by these emphatic figures of speech, by making St. Peter foundation, key-bearer, and shepherd ; but that was not enough. " And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift

you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren" (St. Luke xxii. 31). Here we have a repetition, in plain terms, of what our Lord says in other words: "The gates of hell shall not prevail" against His Church. Satan hath desired to have it, his forces are raging around it, but he shall not prevail. The Church's safety shall be in the rock on which it is built. I have prayed for thee; *thou* shalt keep away the enemy, that he may not sift as wheat thee and thy brethren.

These words contain two things: the promise of a perpetual assistance—that a divine hand shall ever uphold Peter in the person of his successors, as it once upheld himself on the stormy sea of Galilee: and a commission to confirm others. But, in itself, this commission includes the grant of supreme authority. If Christ has given to Peter a commission to confirm, who shall venture to say that he may not interfere?—who can lawfully say that he is going beyond the limits of his authority? Are those who are to be confirmed and strengthened whilst Satan is storming around—are they to dictate to the power that succours them how it shall act? Why should our Lord give such a promise? Why should He pray for Peter that his faith should not fail if He did not mean to make him the instrument by which the faith was to be preserved unsullied, if He had not meant to lay upon him the charge of all his brethren?

These direct, unfigurative words, then, strengthen and confirm the commission which was given to Peter in the various figures which our Lord had used, and would make plain their meaning, if they admitted of any doubt.

I now come to speak of a part of the Pope's prerogative which is especially interesting at the present day. The Catechism says: "The Pope is infallible," and "When I say that the Pope is infallible, I mean that, as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, the Pope cannot err when he defines a doctrine concerning faith and morals to be held by the whole Church. The Papal infallibility is a matter of faith, which all Catholics are bound to believe. It was defined by the Vatican Council, the last of all the general councils.

This is the form of the Council's decree: The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex-cathedra*—that is, when in the performance of his office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church—possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, that same infallibility which the Divine Redeemer willed

His Church to possess in defining doctrine about faith or morals; and, therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church. If any one presume to contradict this, our definition—which God forbid—let him be anathema."

Now, let us consider what this "infallibility" means; but, first, what does it *not* mean? It is necessary to speak of this, on account of the very wild ideas that Protestants often have on the subject. It does *not* mean that the Pope is *impeccable*—that is, that he cannot do wrong. In that respect he is like all other Christians, though we cannot doubt that he receives great and special graces from God. It does *not* mean that everything that the Pope does is the wisest and most judicious course that could be taken; it does *not* mean that what he says as a preacher or a writer is necessarily free from error; it does not even mean that in his office of supreme ecclesiastical judge he may not be mistaken. It means that when he has to decide, as supreme head of the Church, what is, or is not, the true doctrine of the Church He is, by God's assistance, preserved from error.

He is infallible as head of the Church—that is, he is the divinely-appointed organ of the Church's infallibility: it is not as if the Pope had one infallibility, and the Church another, but the Church's infallibility can only be brought into action by the Pope—either in a general council, acting with the other Bishops, or alone.

The infallibility of the Pope has been pronounced an article of faith in our own day. It is not as if a moment's practical doubt on the question had ever existed in the Church; but, up to that time, there had been different theories as to *how* the Pope was infallible. The Gallican party maintained—and for a time the opinion was tolerated in the Church—that the infallible certainty of the Pope's decree depended, not on his authority only, but on his decree being accepted by the body the Church. The Pope's decree always *was* accepted by the Church, and it was not tolerated that any one should appeal from his decision, but still they thought a case *might* arise in which the Church would reject the Pope's judgment. That idea is now condemned, and it is decided that the Pope's infallibility does *not* come from the consent of the Church, but is directly given by our Lord.

It may seem strange that such a decision is only now given—at the end of so many ages—but it is not so in reality. If there had been any *practical* doubt, the Church could not have gone on for a day, but the last thing a settled government does is to make theories as to its own power. If the faithful had not known whether they were, or were not, to accept the Pope's

judgment as the voice of God, there must at once have been anarchy—and the fact that there never has been a disturbance or question about the Papal power, but that the theory of it was finally settled in the midst of profound tranquillity, is, in itself, one of the strongest possible proofs of the Divine origin, and universal acceptance, of that power.

It is, indeed, necessarily contained in the headship given by our Lord: a foundation which *may* give way, and turn out at last to be only sand, is not the rock promised by our Lord: a shepherd who may occasionally lead his flock astray, and requires to be put right, from time to time by his own sheep, is not the guide promised by the Good Shepherd. If the faith of Peter himself is liable to fail, he cannot confirm his brethren—and, therefore, our Lord says: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." In many ways our Lord fulfils this gracious promise, and, conspicuously, in the establishment of His vicar on earth. In him we have our Lord as a ruler, a teacher, and a guide, since it is the wisdom and power of Jesus which upholds him and preserves him from error as the Head of His Church.

SERMON XXVI.

The Marks of the Church.

"The Queen stood on Thy right hand in golden raiment wrought about with variety" (Ps. xliv. 10).

THE Catholic Church is the Spouse of Christ. She is made up, indeed, of sinful men, and, therefore, scandal will necessarily arise amongst her members; and accordingly our Lord says: "It must needs be that scandals come" (St. Matt. xviii. 7). The Church is the field in which the Lord sowed good seed, but "while men were asleep his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way. And when the blade had sprung up and had brought forth fruit, there appeared also the cockle" (St. Matt. xiii. 25). In spite, however, of all the scandals which have arisen, and will arise, amongst individuals, to the end of time, the Church as a body will always be the Spouse of Christ, which can never fall away, and never be spotted or stained in His sight. There may be shortcomings amongst the rulers of the Church, and rebellion and iniquity amongst her people, but in herself the "gates of hell shall never prevail against her." "Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life. That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25).

This, then, my dear brethren, was our Blessed Lord's gracious design in establishing His Church: to make her His Spouse, purchased by His Precious Blood, and richly endowed with His graces, with an essential sanctity which all the weaknesses of her children, and all the assaults of the enemy, should never be able to tarnish; she was to be the Queen, bearing about amongst men the marks of her divine dignity, the golden garment which becomes her rank as the daughter of the Most High, and the Spouse of His Divine Son.

The Church of God upon earth must always possess certain supernatural characteristics by which she can be known; she has a divine origin, and, therefore, must be unlike all societies which spring from the earth; she is to be the witness to Christ, and, therefore, she must be able to show certain signs and tokens by which her claim to confidence may be known; she is the ap-

pointed teacher of men, and must, therefore, always be able to produce the credentials which establish her authority to teach.

The Catechism says: "The Church of Christ has these four marks by which we may know her: she is one, she is holy, she is Catholic, she is apostolic." These four marks are no modern invention, but are contained in the Creed of the First General Council—made when the early ages of persecution and martyrdom were only just concluded. The Nicene Creed expresses its belief in "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church," and its words have been in constant use amongst Christians up to the present day. Even those who are, unfortunately, separated from the Catholic Church still, as a rule, bear witness in word, at least, that the Church must be one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic. It is of these marks that I propose to speak to-day.

Before discussing the marks of the Church, however, there is a consideration which is sometimes forgotten: you must have something to apply them to. The Church must have an existence in some distinct, tangible form before you can begin to consider whether she is One, Holy, Catholic, or Apostolic. If you cannot say precisely what the Church means, and where it is; if it is uncertain what the Church includes or excludes, it is idle to talk of its distinguishing marks. If you mean by the Church a visible, organized society, under a regular government, with well-defined boundaries, which all men can see, we may reasonably talk of the marks by which she is to be known; but if you mean merely a number of individuals scattered throughout the world, with no bond of union, and no power of acting together, and no centre of authority, who cannot in any way be said to form a society or corporate body, it is useless to discuss the marks which distinguish them as a body.

The first mark of the Church is unity. She must be one because God is one. Unity is the mark of God throughout His creation; in everything, great and small, we find the evidence of one Almighty hand, and one all-wise mind. In the midst of the immense variety of life which surrounds us, we can everywhere trace one all-powerful law, and a unity and consistency of idea which is only illustrated by the infinite variety of detail with which it is carried out. So it must be in the spiritual order; the Church, which is God's spiritual kingdom, must be marked by the same unity and consistency of design which distinguishes the rest of His creation. The Spouse of Christ must be clothed in the "golden raiment" of unity "wrought about" with the infinite variety of precious graces which He has bestowed upon her. "One body, and one spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and

Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all. But to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ" (Eph. iv. 4).

Here, my dear brethren, we have the picture of the Church of God. Because there is one Lord and Father of all, there must be not only one spirit, but one body of the Church; as there is but one baptism, so there can be but one faith, whilst, at the same time, there is every variety of grace, "according to the measure of the giving of Christ." This unity includes two things: unity of faith and unity of organization, by which the Church is formed into one body. Faith is the grace by which we accept the teaching of God, and the subject-matter of faith is what God has taught us. Everything that God has taught is part of the faith, which, directly or indirectly, expressly or implicitly, we have to accept: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." "He, therefore, that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of God" (St. Matt. v. 19). At the same time, nothing that has *not* been taught by God can ever form part of the faith; men may find out many things themselves which, in their own way, are good and true, but these are always essentially distinct from the faith which is revealed by God.

The "faith once delivered to the saints," for which St. Jude tells us we are to "contend earnestly" (v. 3), must, therefore, necessarily be one, since God cannot possibly vary his teaching. What He has once taught as true must necessarily be true for all times, for all people, and under all circumstances, and, therefore, unity of doctrine is a necessary mark of faith that comes from God, and any system of religion which is not consistent and unchanging in its teaching, is thereby convicted of not being the true religion of our Lord, since "Jesus Christ is yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever."

Now, this unity of faith is, and is acknowledged to be, the one great distinguishing mark of the Catholic Church. Outside her pale there have been, and are, many societies containing at least portions of Christian truth, and able to boast of many excellencies and virtues amongst their members; but the one thing to which none of them can lay claim is unity of faith, and for an obvious reason: such doctrinal unity is a divine gift, which no natural qualities can ever secure.

And, now, let us see what this unity of faith means more exactly. First, it means that from the beginning of the Church till the end the faith never has varied, and never will vary. From the day of Pentecost until this hour, and so on till the

consummation of the world, the faith will always be the same. This does not mean that the faith has always been expressed in the same words, and that no new explanations, or *definitions* of faith, have been given. Such a state of things would be an impossibility where men's minds are perpetually at work, and fresh questions are constantly arising, in the ever busy human understanding. Every question that comes, almost necessarily involves a fresh explanation, and without such explanation the truth is obscured and would soon be reduced to unmeaning forms of words. A divinely-appointed teacher like the Catholic Church must go on, therefore, clearing up in each age the difficulties that arise, and making the truth more and more distinct. So it has been from the beginning, and so it will be to the end. The Apostles began it themselves in their first Council at Jerusalem. They had to decide what was the relation of the Old Law to the New: whether the obligations which had been of Divine command up till that time were still binding. They began their decree with the words: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay no further burden upon you" (Acts xv. 28).

The Holy Spirit, who, by their mouths thus began the work of solving difficulties, and clearing up questions of faith and practice, continued with the Church, and by the voice of her pastors, has decided all the great questions which in turn arose —the Divinity of our Lord and the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity—the question of Divine grace and original sin, and all things else which were necessary for preserving the "faith once delivered to the saints" uninjured down to our own day; and the same Holy Spirit will always be with the Church in every difficulty which may hereafter arise.

Unity of faith, then, does not mean one unaltered from words, but one distinct and consistent doctrine never varying, never going back, in which, as it were, line falls upon line, so that the truth becomes more and more vivid, and is made clearer and more manifest to each generation as it comes.

To secure unity of faith, it is not enough constantly and consistently to teach the true faith; it is necessary also, to reject everything inconsistent with it, since unity of faith is not consistent with tolerating error. People sometimes talk as if tolerating erroneous doctrine was a sign of a "large-hearted" and "liberal" disposition; whereas, it really means nothing but indifference to unity, and purity of faith. If faith is really the revelation—the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ—how can you possibly suffer anything which is contrary to it? St. Paul writes: "As we said before, so now I say again: "If any one

preach to you a Gospel besides that which you have received, let him be anathema" (Gal. i. 9).

One of the marks, then, of the Church's unity is the fidelity with which she has denounced error. She is the guardian of Christ's truth, and has never failed to denounce everything contrary to it: her teachers are to feed the flock and to lead them to the true pastures of Christ's word, and she has never failed to warn them of every danger of error. The stern and uncompromising way in which she has condemned every deviation from the truth is very often attributed to her as a fault, whereas it is, in reality, a necessary part of that unity of faith which essentially belongs to her. There is a lesson which we ourselves may learn from this—and that is, that we cannot be really true to our faith without being intolerant of error; we may be as kind and forbearing as possible with those out of the Church, and give them all possible credit for good faith and good intentions, but we must never have any sympathy for false doctrine—if we do, we place our own faith in great peril.

For real unity of faith, it is necessary, not only that the Church, as a body, should have one faith, but also that, in some way or other, every individual member of the Church should share in the same faith. How is this to be done, since the minds and education of different people vary so much? How can poor ignorant people, who have no means of instruction, and little children, who have hardly arrived at the use of reason, have the same faith as the learned? It is only in the Catholic Church that this is possible. The "object of faith" is not one or two doctrines, but the whole teaching of the Catholic Church, which has been made known, or will be made known. Every Catholic accepts the Church as a teacher sent by God, whose word may be implicitly relied on, and, therefore, accepts as absolute and certain truth that which she has declared to be part of God's revelation, and, moreover, accepts by anticipation those things that she may hereafter have to tell us, should it be necessary for her further to explain the Catholic faith. All, therefore, have precisely the same faith by believing in the authority which teaches it: they believe implicitly—that is, they take it on trust, independently of their knowledge of the details, so that the differences of learning and mental capacity do not in any way affect the unity of faith.

When we come, however, to explicit faith—that is, to the faith which considers each article in detail, and accepts it individually, then all the differences of intellect and education come into play, as, obviously, one man will know very much more about the particulars of his faith than another, and have

clearer ideas concerning it. It is obvious that little children and uninstructed people can know very little of the faith explicitly, but have to accept on trust a great deal, which they are unable to remember or understand. It is not that they have less faith, or a different faith, from those better instructed, but that they have less capacity for grasping the details of it.

Every Christian ought to know as much about the faith of the Church as is possible, consistently with his position in life and means of knowledge. "The secret and hidden things of Thy wisdom Thou has made manifest to me" (Ps. l. 8). Almighty God has deigned to reveal Himself to us, and to tell us many wonderful things about His own Divine Nature and attributes, and He has given us a guide, that our feet may not wander through these mysterious ways: the least Christians can do is to learn these truths according to their capacity. We must believe *implicitly* everything the Church teaches; but there are many things which we are also bound to believe with explicit faith—that is, with accurate knowledge; and the wider our knowledge, and the greater our intellectual hold on the mysteries of faith, the better for ourselves.

The unity of faith, however, is only one part of that unity which is the special mark and glory of the Catholic Church; she must also have unity of discipline. One faith alone is not enough to make one body. The very idea of a body suggests the union of a number of different parts, connected in such a way that they depend one on another; there must be communication between them, and mutual reliance; there must be the head and the members; there must be commanding and obeying, and distinctions of officers and functions. St. Paul very elaborately compares the Church to a living body, and points out that there must be an organization corresponding to that of the natural body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body: so also is Christ. For in one spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and in one spirit we have all been made to drink. For the body also is not of one member, but of many. If the foot should say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore, not of the body? . . . . But now God hath set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where would be the body?" (I. Cor. xii. 12).

This corporate unity, by which all her members are visibly united together, and are visibly in subjection to one head, is, indeed, the great and special mark of the Church. The unity of

faith could not have been preserved amongst men except by unity of discipline and common obedience; and, if the same faith *had* been miraculously maintained without this corporate union, it could never have been a mark of the Church in any great or conspicuous way. It is, and always must be, a difficult matter to trace very accurately the unity of faith—to see how the faith of our own day agrees with the faith of the early ages. It requires some knowledge of the world to ascertain the identity of our faith with that of distant parts of the world; so that unity of faith can never be much of a guide to the simple and unlearned, but all men can see that we are one body in discipline and obedience. That we are united to the Holy See, and pay obedience to our Holy Father the Pope, is a sign which no one can fail to see. Every Catholic in the world is directly united to him by the Catholic hierarchy, as the members of the human body are united to the head. Every Bishop must be in communion with the Holy See; each one must be appointed Bishop, but with the consent of the Pope, and is in constant communication with him; every Bishop rules his own diocese, and on him the pastors of souls depend, and with the pastors the flocks; so that there is the exact mutual dependence and unity of obedience which the comparison of the human body suggests.

The Church is divided by its organization into two parts: those whose office it is to teach, and those who are bound to listen—the teaching Church and the hearing Church. The teaching Church consists of the Pope and the Bishops in communion with Him. The Pope is the universal teacher, and alone possesses the pastoral office in its fulness. The Catechism tells us that "the Pope is the spiritual father of all Christians," and is "the shepherd and teacher of all Christians, because Christ made St. Peter the shepherd of the whole flock when He said to Him, Feed My lambs, feed My sheep. He also prayed that his faith might never fail, and commanded Him to confirm his brethren." The Bishops under him, and in communion with him, are the ordinary teaching authority, each in his own diocese. To them are joined the priests, who have a share of their office, and, under them, are the ordinary channels by which the teaching of the Church is made known to the people.

Bishops and priests, however, are not necessarily teachers; they have not a right to teach simply because they have received the sacrament of Holy Orders. Their teaching authority comes really from this, that they are in communion with the supreme authority, and have a commission, either by direct delegation from the head of the Church, or in virtue of the position which they occupy with his sanction.

And now, what is the hearing Church? We may say that every individual Christian belongs to it; not only the laity, but the clergy and the Bishops and the Pope himself as a private individual. Those who are the organs of the Church are none the less its members, and bound to "hear the Church." The shepherds are themselves sheep also, and are as much dependent upon the guidance of the Divine Shepherd as the meanest of their flock. It is the office of the pastors, by the light which God gives to them, to make clear what is the teaching of the Church, but when that teaching is plain they are just as much bound to follow it as any one of the laity.

The most solemn way in which the doctrinal decisions of the Church are promulgated is by a General Council—that is, when the Bishops of the whole Church are summoned by the Pope to meet in council, and there to consider the questions which need decision. The Apostles themselves, as we read in the Holy Scripture, set the example of this solemn form at the Council of Jerusalem, and it has been followed on all great occasions down to our own time. The decree of the General Council, which has been duly confirmed by the Pope as head of the Church, is infallible, and must be received by all Christians as the voice of God, speaking by His Church. But this most formal and solemn way of deciding can only be used on very great occasions, and the ordinary way in which the Church speaks is by the decree of the Pope, when "as pastor and teacher of all Christians he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church." Such a decree of the Pope has always been received as the infallible teaching of the Church, and it is now decided that it is infallible of *itself*, and not from any subsequent consent of the Church, and that it possesses the very same infallibility which our Lord granted to the whole Church.

The unity which joins all members of the Church into one visible body is, as I have said, the most conspicuous sign which distinguishes it on earth, and it is the one most insisted upon by the Fathers. There is no doctrine more clearly laid down from the earliest times than the absolute necessity of being within the Church's pale, and the greatness of the sin of separating from the union of the Church. I will give you a beautiful passage from a saint and martyr of the third century—St. Cyprian—on this subject: "As the sun has rays many, yet one light; and the tree boughs many, yet its strength is one, resting on the firmly-clinging root; as when many streams flow down from one fountain head, though a multiplicity of waters may seem to be diffused from the bountifulness of the overflowing

abundance, yet is unity preserved in the common source. Part a ray of the sun from its orb, this division of light the unity allows not; break a branch from a tree, once broken it can bud no more; cut the stream from its source, the remnant dries up. Thus the Church, flooded with the light of the Lord, puts forth her rays through the whole world; yet the light is one, which is spread over every place while its unity of body is preserved. In the luxuriance of her plenty she stretches her branches over the universal earth, and spreads out far and wide her beautiful and onward streams. Yet there is one head and one source, and one mother abundant in the results of her fruitfulness. It is of her that we are born; with her milk are we nourished; her breath is our life. The Spouse of Christ cannot become adulterate, she is undefiled and chaste. She owns but one home; with spotless purity she guards the sanctity of one chamber. She keeps us for God; she appoints unto a kingdom the sons that she has borne. Whosoever, being separated from the Church, is joined to an adultress, he is cut off from the promises of the Church. Neither shall he come unto the rewards of Christ who leaves the Church of Christ. He is an alien, he is profane, he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for a Father who has not the Church for a mother. If any one was able to escape who was without the ark of Noah, then can he escape who is out of doors beyond the Church? The Lord warns, and says: 'He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.' He who breaks the peace and concord of Christ's Church, does so against Christ. He who gathers elsewhere than in the Church, scatters the Church of Christ" (*Faith of Catholics*, vol. i. p. 143).

From these strong and beautiful words, my dear brethren, we can see how great was the importance the Fathers attached to the visible unity of the Church, and how great an evil and misery they thought it for any one to be separated from her communion. It must, indeed, always be a very great crime or a very great misfortune; any one who is cut off from the communion of the Church by his own fault is guilty of a great crime, and those who are outside, even when it is by no fault of their own, are very unfortunate. It must always be a great misfortune to be separated from the fold of Christ, and from all the blessings which He gives to the sheep that are within the fold, even to those who are not responsible for their condition.

And now, my dear brethren, what is the lesson we have ourselves to learn? The first thing is to be very jealous of the unity of the Church, and to have a great horror of anything—of any line of conduct, of any perversity or self-will—which is

calculated to disturb the harmony of God's Church. Every day in the most solemn part of the Mass the priest prays God "to deign to grant peace and unity to His Church according to His will," and the same ought to be the constant prayer of every good Catholic. Our Lord at His Last Supper prayed for His followers "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (St. John xvii. 21). This, then, is the object for which our Lord established and preserved His fold in unity, that we might be one, not only by the possession of one faith, but by unity of heart and charity, so that the world might know that our holy faith was founded by Him.

SERMON XXVII.

Sanctity.

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (I. Thess. iv. 3).

OUR Lord established His Church on earth to make us holy. He had brought with Him into this world a new standard of holiness, and the work He designed for His Church was to spread and to maintain this standard amongst men. He was not contented with such holiness as had been practised even by the saints of the Old Law, but would call His followers to something much higher. In His words to the Jews our Blessed Lord keeps on drawing a distinction between what had been asked of men in old times, and what He Himself should require. "For I tell you that unless your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to them of old . . . . but *I* say to you" (St. Matt. v. 20).

The idea of sanctity which Jesus brought into the world, my dear brethren, was that of perfection; and, to lead men to it, He put before them the highest possible standard of perfection—a standard and example which they would not have dared to take for themselves—nothing else than the infinite perfection of the Most Holy Lord God. "Be ye, therefore, perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (St. Matt. v. 48).

In the first place, our Lord was not content with exterior goodness, but He looked to the heart. If the heart was not pure and right before the Lord, no sort of exterior work, no sacrifice, no excellence of any kind, would avail. "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness . . . . because you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness" (St. Matt. xxiii. 25).

Our Lord lays the greatest stress on purity of heart, without which there can be no holiness in His sight. "The things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man, for from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, false testimonies, blasphemies; these are the things that defile a man" (St. Matt. xv. 18). He warns us, therefore, not to be satisfied with avoiding the external

manifestation of evil, but to go deeper, and root it out of our hearts. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

But perfection was not only to be interior, but complete; we were to "stand perfect and full in all the will of God." We were to have a perfect love of God, and, at the same time, a universal charity for our neighbours. "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets." Our Lord came down to extend the great and earnest love of God amongst men—that they might have a greater knowledge of Him and a more burning love than had been given even to the holiest men of earlier ages; that they might be "rooted and founded in charity, and be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth." He came to "cast fire upon earth"—this fire of the love of God which was to produce such marvellous effects on the hearts of men. He taught them to love God as their Father in heaven; He taught them that it was a privilege to do and suffer anything for the glory of His name; He taught them that "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for Me shall find it."

To this excellent perfection in the love of God, our Lord joined a universal charity to men—a charity which was not to be bounded by country or by religion, but to spread over the whole earth. His Disciples were to love their brethren with a charity which was to resemble that of their "Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." And this charity was not to be a mere external charity, but was to be accompanied by interior love and a spirit of forgiveness: "So shall my Heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." Our Lord was not contented with the love of brethren hitherto practised by men, but demanded a perfection as yet unknown. "You have heard that it hath been said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (St. Matt. v. 44).

To this exalted standard of perfection in the love of God and man, our Lord added ideas of holiness of which men had never dreamed. He was not contented with putting before them what all must practise, but he gave them *counsels* of perfection to which only a few were to be called as a special favour: "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me." Here our Lord indicates a state of perfection that was quite new to the world—which was to consist not merely in making a good use of worldly possessions, but in abandoning all things for God.

The work of the Catholic Church on earth was to carry out these exalted ideas of sanctity and perfection. She must first teach these new principles to men, and insist upon them, so that the world, in spite of itself, should be compelled to listen and to adopt them; and, when once they have been taught, it was for the Church to preserve them through ages. She taught them, and taught them so thoroughly, that the world made them its own, and now thinks that Christian morality is its own idea and invention. Even those outside the Church have for their own, the ideas and principles which she first taught, and have, as it were, entered into her inheritance; but still she has to watch over them, and preserve them from alteration.

There is a perpetual tendency amongst men to come down from the high principles which our Lord taught, and to make the law of God suit the convenience or prejudices of men—to accommodate the Gospel to the spirit of the age, and the Church only can make head against this disposition. It is plain that nothing invented by man, and founded only on men, can resist the mighty force of the human opinion and feeling; and therefore it was that our Lord built His Church upon a rock, that it might be able to stand fast amidst the ever-moving flood.

The Catechism says: "The Church is holy, because she teaches a holy doctrine, offers to all the means of holiness, and is distinguished by the eminent holiness of so many thousands of her children." Let us consider these grounds of holiness. She teaches a holy doctrine in the sense that every word, every point of the faith revealed by God, is sacred, and has been preserved as such. The Catholic Church is now, and has been through all ages, ready to suffer everything and sacrifice everything rather than allow the smallest doctrine of the faith to be tampered with. She has shown a thousand times over that no earthly consideration, neither the fear nor the favour of this world, will ever induce her to compromise in the least matter concerning the faith. "Amen, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, not one jot or tittle shall not pass of the law till all

be fulfilled." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass" (St. Matt. v. 18—24–35).

The Catholic Church is the guardian of this holy doctrine, and heaven and earth shall pass away rather than that she should prevaricate one word of what she has received from her Divine Master. The doctrine is holy in itself, and holy in its influence upon men, and the Catholic Church has gone on, through all ages, enforcing it; in every council, in every assemblage, the same voice is heard, always recalling men to the high standard which our Lord had once taught. No matter how corrupt the age was, and how sinful men had become—no matter that the very Councils themselves were composed of sinful men—the Church has always had the same thing to say: "Be ye holy, because I, the Lord thy God, am holy" (Lev. xix. 2). "Be you, therefore, perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." The very fact that scandals have sometimes arisen, which is often objected to the Church—as if our Lord had not foretold that they would arise—only makes more remarkable the constant and unfailing holiness of the Church's doctrine.

But the Church was appointed by our Lord, not only to maintain unsullied the holy doctrine and high moral standard which He had taught—she was also to provide the means for the personal sanctification of her children. In the nature of things the Church on earth cannot be holy in the sense that all her members are holy; that is the glory reserved for the triumphant Church in heaven. Here the Church must be made up of sinful men, and her work is amongst sinful men, who are to be reclaimed, taught, encouraged, and made perfect, and she must possess the spirit and the means for carrying out this work.

The conversion of sinners is the one great object which engrosses all her thought, so that in her eyes everything else is trivial in comparison. All the great ends of human ambition, of which men think so much, are as nothing in the idea of the Church in comparison with the sanctification of one single soul. She is here to sanctify souls by applying to them the grace of God; her work is to take sinners and to turn them into saints, or, at any rate, to snatch them from destruction, and, for this purpose, she has been abundantly supplied by her Divine Master with the power of speaking to their hearts, and providing for their wants.

In the first place, she is always calling sinners to repentance: "Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand." She is like St. John the Baptist, with a word of warning to every human soul. Oh, my dear brethren, how often have we listened to the

voice of the Church calling us! for how many years has that solemn warning been repeated to us: "the kingdom of God is at hand;" "your salvation is nearer than when you believed;" "now is the acceptable time!" You cannot say that the Church has failed to call you to repentance.

But it is not mere calling that we want, we need also encouragement. Half our danger is that we are so bowed down by sin and misery that we lose confidence, and think that there is no more hope; but, however deeply we have fallen, we may always hear the voice of God's Church: You *can*, you *must* return: God will not "allow you to be tempted above that which you are able." God has provided a remedy for you, and will wash away your sins: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool" (Isaias i. 18). These are the encouraging words which the Church constantly addresses to us in God's name; but she has not merely words, but actual help to offer. In the sacrament of Penance our Lord has given to His Church the most powerful of all instruments for converting sinners. It is by this that she is able to go out, like the father of the Prodigal Son, to meet sinners: "And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him" (St. Luke xv. 20).

When sinners think of turning to God they are, like the prodigal, "a great way off;" and if they were left to themselves, without any special means of grace, without anything specially provided for their wants, they would faint on the way. Therefore our Lord has furnished His Church with this most excellent sacrament for the encouragement and support of sinners. But it is not only for great sinners that our Lord has provided His Church. Our Lord has made His Church like a mother, to watch over her children from the cradle to the grave, never forgetting them, always encouraging them, always able to supply their wants out of the treasures entrusted to her. Our Lord promised His sheep that they should "go in, and should go out, and should find pasture." "The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture, He hath brought me up on the waters of refreshment" (Psalm xxii. 1). Surely, my dear brethren, this must be the most conspicuous mark of the Church of God—that she has pasture fitted for the refreshment of all her children at all times, and she alone can claim to be the mother of the children who can provide for their wants. In the sacraments the Church can minister to every age in human life, and provides a fitting support in every

trial. Hardly are we born into this world than our spiritual mother provides for us in the sacrament of Baptism, cleanses us in that precious laver, and presents us unspotted to her Divine Spouse. As life goes on, at every emergency that occurs, there is always some sacrament to give us the special help we need. The Church has always something for us—some special way in which the Precious Blood of Christ may be applied to our souls, and so she goes on, supporting the weak, reclaiming the erring, and perfecting the elect, and never leaves us till the day when she commends us to God with loving last words: "I commend thee, dear brother, to the Almighty God, and consign thee to the care of Him whose creature thou art, that, when thou shalt have paid the debt of all mankind by death, thou mayest return to thy Maker, who formed thee from the dust of the earth." And even then her care is not over, for she follows us in her prayers before the throne of God, and, day after day, in the Holy Mass, she begs of Almighty God to "grant to all that rest in Christ a place of refreshment, light, and peace."

The Church has for her children a daily sacrifice and a daily food. "The Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," is offered each day in a thousand churches, and by this sacrifice is constantly renewed the great Sacrifice of Calvary, "for as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come" (I. Cor. xi. 26). And, with this Eucharistic Sacrifice, in which our Lord constantly offers Himself for the wants of His people, the Church offers 'the sacrifice of praise always to God—that is to say, the fruit of lips confessing to His name" (Heb. xiii. 15). The Psalmist says: "I have gone round, and have offered up in His tabernacle a sacrifice of jubilation: I will sing and speak praise to the Lord." "Seven times a day have I given praise unto Thee" (Ps. xxvi. 6—cxviii. 164). So, throughout the whole world, the "Divine Office" of praise is daily recited "seven times a day" by every Bishop and priest of the Church, to praise and thank God on behalf of the people, and to beg His grace and mercy for them, and that the Church on earth may join her praises to those of the triumphant Church in heaven.

But the greatest of all the gifts which our Lord offers to us in His Church is the sacramental feast of His own Body and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament. "As the Living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (St. John vi. 58). Our Lord has promised to be the very source of our spiritual life, that we may live by His Divine life: He has promised to become to us "a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting." He has given Him-

self to us entirely, so that all His divine perfections, all His most precious merits, and all His incomparable virtues, may be applied for the salvation of our souls. St. Cyril says of the Holy Eucharist: "Wherefore I counsel thee to betake thee to godly thoughts, and to live carefully and holily, and so to receive that blessing—a blessing which, believe me, doth banish not death only, but all diseases likewise. For when Christ dwelleth in us, He stilleth the law of death in our members, which warreth against the law of our mind. He giveth strength to godliness, He turneth to calm the turbulent surging of our mind, He cureth them that are sick, He raiseth up them that are fallen, and, like the Good Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep, He prevaileth that the sheep perish not" *(Breviary Lesson).*

When we think of all these different means of holiness and perfection which our Lord has supplied to us in His Church, and particularly in the Holy Eucharist, may we not, my dear brethren, say with St. John Chrysostom: "Ah, me! how many a way is open to us whereby we may be saved! He hath made us His, He hath given His Body to us, and we still are not turned away from the evil."

But the Church does not provide for the conversion of sinners only, but also for the perfecting of the just. She has, as the apostle says, "strong meat for the perfect, for them who by custom have their senses exercised in the discerning of good and evil" (Heb. v. 14). From the very beginning of the Church down to our own time there have been found thousands upon thousands of souls who have striven and are striving to carry out the very letter of our Lord's counsel: "Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me" (St. Luke xviii. 22).

The counsels of perfection have their home in the Catholic Church, and bands of men and women who are ever springing up within her to devote their lives to a more perfect following of Christ are one of her distinguishing attributes. In vain have the powers of the world tried, again and again, to disperse them; in vain has the wisdom of the world derided their simplicity." "These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach; we fools esteemed their life madness and their end without honour; behold, now they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints" (Wisd. v. 3).

They follow the very word and example of our Lord Himself. "The foxes have holes; and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (St. Matt. viii. 20). He was the example of poverty in the stable of Bethlehem; He

was poor during His life, and consummated His poverty when stripped of all things as He hung upon the cross. To follow Him, the Church has encouraged her children to give up everything—by a life of voluntary poverty and privation to follow Him. Crowds of men and women have embraced the virginal state, that they might have a part in that happy band which St. John describes, in a special manner, as following our Lord in heaven: "And they sung, as it were, a new canticle before the throne, and before the living creatures and ancients, and no man could say the canticle but the hundred and forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women, for they were virgins. These follow the Lamb withersoever He goeth; these were purchased from among men the first fruits to God and the Lamb" (Apoc. xiv. 3). The one great work of the Church on earth is the perfecting of the elect, and they are to be made perfect by the imitation of their Master. "And we know that to them that love God all things work together unto good to such as, according to this purpose, are called to be saints, for whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren" (Rom. viii. 28).

These, my dear brethren, are the "means of holiness" which the Church offers to us. She watches over us all with motherly care during our whole lives, from the cradle to the grave, and provides for every state and condition—for young and old, for the strong and for the weak, to reclaim the sinner and to perfect the saint. If we do not avail ourselves of all these helps as we ought, at least let us dwell upon them, that we may value the loving kindness of our Lord in providing such efficacious means to lead us on in the way of salvation.

But the Church does not merely provide us with means of grace; she supplies us also with the grandest possible examples of heroic virtue, to teach us what the grace of God can accomplish, in spite of the weakness of human nature. The Church is holy, because "she is distinguished by the eminent holiness of so many thousands of her children." Our Lord reigns in heaven surrounded by glorious armies of saints. "Thee, the glorious choir of the Apostles; Thee, the laudable company of prophets; Thee the white-robed army of martyrs, doth praise." These are the trophies of the Catholic Church, and the perpetual example to her children on earth. Do we want to know how efficacious are the means of grace, let us look up to heaven, and see how wonderful God is in His saints. Do we want examples of fortitude to teach us how we are to overcome this world, let us look

to the triumphant martyrs of the early Church—St. Stephen and St. Lawrence—and to the long train of men and women after them, even down to our own day, who have resisted unto blood, and deserved the palm branch of victory. Do we want patience to struggle against the daily trials of life, we have before us the grand array of confessors, holy Bishops, and priests, men of all ranks and degrees, Kings on their thrones, and peasants amid their daily toils, who have "fought the good fight, and finished their course," for whom "a crown of justice has been laid up by the just Judge." Do we want courage to fight against the allurements of the flesh, there is the long train of virgins, "who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," to encourage us. Do we want examples of enterprise and self-devotion in the cause of God, there are thousands of apostolic missionaries, who sacrificed everything on earth to spread the name of Jesus amongst men.

Numbers of these missionaries showed a courage and spirit of enterprise which the world could not but admire, and carried the cross of Christ into countries where even the soldier's sword did not dare to enter. If you want examples of heroism, look at the picture of St. Francis Xavier dying on the island of Sancian in his vain attempt to enter the great Chinese empire after the wonders which he had accomplished in India; or look at St. Peter Claver spending his life amongst the negro slaves, becoming their servant, and making their conversion the work, and recreation, too, of his life. And this apostolic work belongs not to one age or another, but has been continued in constant succession from the days of the Apostles to our own time.

They were all men like ourselves, with the same difficulties to encounter, the same faith to encourage them, and the same sacraments to supply their wants. The grace of God, and the aids of the Catholic Church, were sufficient for them, and will be sufficient for us also, if only we will avail ourselves of them.

But now, my dear brethren, let us come to the practical part of this consideration. "This is the will of God, your sanctification." Our Lord has made His Church holy that we also may be holy, and all His good gifts to His Church will be thrown away, as far as we are concerned, if we do not labour for our own sanctification. It will not do to boast that we are members of the Holy Catholic Church. "I tell you God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (St. Matt. iii. 9). "And then I will profess unto them I never knew you: Depart from me you that work iniquity" (St. Matt. vii. 23).

To be holy means to be holy in all things. A man is holy when he tries in all things to conform himself to the will of

God, and if there is any one point in which he is not at least trying to please God, he is far off from the idea of perfection. "That you may be perfect and entire, and failing in nothing." It is not enough, therefore, to be diligent in prayer and the service of God; you must also carry your religion into all the pursuits of life. A man cannot be a good Christian without at least trying his best to be a good father and a good husband—a good master or a good servant, according to the position in which God has placed him. It is not sufficient to think that your heart is right before God, and keep it unspotted in His sight, if you are not also conscientious in everything you do. All the helps and means of grace which God gives you are intended to help you to glorify Him by doing all the common duties of life in the most perfect manner possible. "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (St. Matt. v. 16).

SERMON XXVIII.

Catholic and Apostolic.

"Thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side" (Isaias lx. 4).

THE distinctive mark of our Lord's mission was that He came as a Saviour to all mankind. He was not like the prophets of old, who were sent to one country and people, but He came to purchase all the nations of the earth with His Precious Blood, to enlighten them all with His faith, and to gather them all into one fold.

He was "the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world" (St. John i. 9). He was the Good Shepherd, who was to gather together all the sheep who "had gone astray, and every one turned aside into his own way." St. Augustine says: "Men were being held bondsmen to the devil, slaves to evil spirits. But they have been redeemed from that bondage. They had been able to sell themselves, but they were not able to redeem themselves. A Redeemer came and paid the price for them. He shed His Blood, and, at that cost, bought the world. Ye ask what He bought. Look what He paid, and ye shall see what He bought. Christ's Blood was the price. What is His Blood worth? What, but the whole world? What, but all men? They are very unthankful for His redemption, or very proud, who say that it was only precious enough to buy the Africans, or that they themselves are so precious, that it was only shed for them. Let there be an end to such conceit, an end to such vain glory. What He paid, He paid for all" *(Brev. Lesson).*

Our Lord, then, died for all men, and, accordingly, the first idea of the religion He established on earth was that it should be "Catholic"—that is, universal. The Church of Christ was not to be, as the Jewish Church had been, the Church of one favoured people; but was to belong to all nations alike, and to be the common mother of all. "The Gentiles are to glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: 'Therefore will I confess to Thee, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and will sing to Thy name.' And again He saith, 'Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people.' And again, 'Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and magnify Him, all ye people.'" (Rom. xv. 9). "For there is no distinction of

the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord is over all, rich unto all that call upon Him, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x. 12).

Whilst our Lord was still in the cradle, the universality of His Church was foretold by the coming of the wise men from the East. The Jews came first to adore Him. The shepherds, keeping the night watches over their flocks around Bethlehem, were summoned to "go to Bethlehem and see the Word that was come to pass, which the Lord had show to them;" but then came the Christmas Day of the Gentiles in the Feast of the Ephiphany, and the Wise Men were called by the star out of the East, and came to Jerusalem, saying: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him. . . . . And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His Mother, and, falling down, they adored Him, and, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (St. Matt. ii. 2).

Such were the signs that marked the beginning of our Lord's earthly mission, and the end of it corresponded, for "Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom" (St. Matt. xxvii. 51). What could better represent the total abolition of all national distinctions of creed, and the union of all men into one religious family—men of all nations called to enter into the house and family of our Infant Saviour, and the sanctuary of God, so long concealed by a mysterious veil, laid open to the eyes of all men.

And how is this Catholicity carried out in our Lord's teaching? "Woman, believe me that the hour cometh when you shall neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem adore the Father. You adore that which you know not; we adore that which we know, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father also seeketh such to adore Him" (St. John iv. 21). "Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem," but throughout the whole earth, in one universal Church, which shall not be bounded by any city or nation, "for from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation, for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. i. 11).

And now let us see how these general words were carried out in detail in the commission given by our Lord to His Apostles: "Going, therefore, teach all nations;" "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that

believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (St. Matt. xxviii. 19; St. Mark xvi. 15). No wider or more universal commission could possibly have been given, but still our Lord thought fit to illustrate His meaning by a special miracle. St. Peter, as the Head of the Church, was the one chosen to open her gates to the Gentiles, and in a vision "he saw the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great linen sheet, let down by the four corners from the heaven to the earth, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, 'Arise, Peter, kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'Far be it from me, for I never did eat anything that is common or unclean.' And the voice spoke to him again the second time, 'That which God hath cleansed, do not thou call common.' . . . . Now, whilst Peter was doubting within himself what the vision that he had seen should mean, behold the men that were sent from Cornelius stood at the gate . . . . and the spirit said to him, 'Behold, three men seek thee; arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent thee'" (Acts x. 11).

Nothing shall henceforth be "common or unclean." No nation of the earth shall be so barbarous as to be excluded from the pale of the Catholic Church; no human being so poor and degraded that he may not claim that he belongs to the Church, and the Church belongs to him, as much as to the most cultivated of mankind. And so St. Peter was sent by God to admit the Gentile, Cornelius, into the Church, and as he "was yet speaking, the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard the word. And the faithful of the circumcision, who came with Peter, were astonished that the grace of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Gentiles also; for they heard them speaking with tongues, and magnifying God. Then Peter answered, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts x. 44).

The Church of God, then, must, of necessity, be Catholic, and the Catechism explains the title in these words: "The Church is Catholic, or Universal, because she subsists in all ages, teaches all nations, and is the one Ark of Salvation for all." Catholic is the title which the Church of God has always borne, and none but those in communion with the Holy See of Rome have ever been able to get possession of the name. I must here quote to you a beautiful passage from St. Augustine, which is very well known, in which he speaks of the title of Catholic: "In the Catholic Church. . . . . Many other things there are which

must justly keep me in her bosom. The agreement of peoples and nations keeps me; an authority begun with miracles, nourished with hope, increased with charity, strengthened by antiquity, keeps me; the succession of priests from the chair itself of the Apostle Peter—unto whom the Lord, after His resurrection, committed His sheep to be fed—down even to the present Bishop, keeps me; finally, the name itself of the Catholic Church keeps me—a name which, in the midst of so many heresies, this Church alone has, not without cause, so held possession of as that, though all heretics would fain have themselves called Catholics, yet, to the inquiry of any stranger, 'Where is the meeting of the Catholic Church held?' no heretic would dare to point to his own basilica or house" (*Faith of Catholics*, vol. i. p. 81).

You see, my dear brethren, St. Augustine, in the fifth century, identifies the name of Catholic with Rome, just as we do now; and he says that others would like to claim the title, but are unable to make it their own, just as they are doing at the present day. This is not peculiar to St. Augustine and his times: we find another Father, St. Pacian, in the fourth century, saying just the same thing: "Suppose I entered, this very day, into a populous city, and found there Marcionites, Apollinarists, Cataphygrians, Novatians, and others of the same sort, all calling themselves Christians, by what name should I be able to recognize the congregation of my own people, were it not from its being called Catholic? Come, tell me, who bestowed so many names on the other peoples? . . . . . Assuredly, that which has stood during so many ages was not borrowed from man. This name "Catholic" sounds not of Marcion, nor of Appelles, nor of Montanus, nor does it take heretics as its authors. . . . . And yet, my brother, fret not yourself, Christian is my name, but Catholic my surname. That names me, this describes me; by this I am approved; by that designated" (*Faith of Catholics*, vol. i. p. 299).

And now, my dear brethren, let us see more exactly what we mean by this quality of Catholicity. The Catechism tells us that it means two distinct things, or, rather, that two conditions are required in order that the Church may be truly called Catholic. There are Catholicity in time, and Catholicity in extent. The Church is Catholic in time or duration, because she existed as one body, without any break, from our Lord's day down to the present time. If it could be shown that at any period since the Apostles the Catholic Church was not existing, she would not be Catholic: if any one could say, for instance, that she began to exist in the fourth century, or the tenth, or sixteenth, she would

have no claim to be called Catholic, because there would be a period during which she did not exist. Of every other body you can tell plainly enough when their existence began, but no man can say when the Church first came into existence. A great Protestant writer says of her: "She saw the commencement of all the Governments and ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world, and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all." There is no break in the long history of the Church for eighteen hundred years, and she alone can claim to fill up the whole duration up to the time when our Lord sent forth His Apostles to teach all nations.

But by Catholicity we more commonly mean the Catholicity of extent—that is, that she is not a national Church, or the Church of one people, but the Church of the whole world. By this we do not mean that there are not many nations which are, in fact, wholly or in part, out of her communion: this does not interfere with her Catholic character. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down on the Apostles and signified the Catholicity of the Church by the gift of tongues, the members of the Church were but few, and those few were of one nation only—but still she was Catholic. When we say she is Catholic we mean that she has a mission to all nations, and capacity and power to receive them all, and to accommodate them all in her communion. She is not dependent upon any worldly authority or form of Government: she belongs to no one nation or state of society more than another, but is equally at home with all. She was born within the limits of the Roman empire, yet she could suit herself, quite as well, to the barbarians who succeeded them. Monarchies or republics, civilization or barbarism, it is all the same to her, since her mission is to all mankind, in all states of society. She is, in short, the exact opposite of a National Church. A National Church is dependent on the Government of a particular nation, it carries with it everywhere the social and political feeling of the nation, and it rests on its strength; however far it may wander abroad, its home is in one nation, and it is a foreigner everywhere else—with the nation it lives, and with the nation it dies. The Catholic Church is of all nations and of no nation: she embraces them all, and is dependent on none.

The Church again is Catholic, not only because she is spread throughout the world, but because she is able to take in all nations, and yet maintain one faith and a corporate union. Many things are universal, but one only Catholic. Error is universal—wherever you go, you find it; but then it is not one. It takes one form in one place, and another in another. It suits

itself to the character of those amongst whom it is found, and flourishes everywhere at the expense of consistency. Heresies are numerous, and are found in all parts of the world, and there is nothing wonderful in it, because they have no corporate union; but the Church is one, and she is marked out from all other communities as the only society on earth which can exist independent of all national and political power, embrace the world with one organization, and call her children out of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, to accept one faith and to obey one Head. "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people, but the Lord shall rise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and Kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes round about thee and see: all these are gathered together, and are come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at at thy side. Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee" (Isaias lx. 2).

These words beautifully represent the Church of God, of which we, my dear brethren, have the privilege of being members. She is spread through every land, and every nation has its part in her; her Sacraments and Sacrifice are to be found in every region of the earth, and the voice of her chief pastor is heard throughout the whole world. "There is no race of men," says St. Justin, "whether of barbarians, or of Greeks, or, in fine, bearing any other name, whether because they live in waggons, or are without a fixed habitation, or dwell in tents, leading a pastoral life, among whom prayers and eucharists are not offered to the Father and Maker of the universe through the name of the crucified Jesus" (*Faith of Catholics*, vol. i. p. 282). This was so in the second century, and how much wider is the Church now?—to how many more nations has she communicated the light of the faith?

And something is to be learned, my dear brethren, from the Catholicity of the Church. In the words of the prophet, our hearts are "to wonder, and be enlarged." We are all a little too apt to shut ourselves in our own particular concerns, and to think too little of what is going on in the great society to which we belong. In every part of her vast domain the Church has trials to bear and exertions to make; truly is she the Church militant, ever fighting—in one place suffering, in another victorious—but ever carrying on that warfare for which she was sent into the world. And ought not we to sympathize in all that is done? Is not one member of the body to feel for the others? If

we would be in sympathy with the Catholic Church, and deserve the name of Catholic, we should learn to interest ourselves, not only in the good of religion around us, but in its progress throughout the whole world.

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith is, therefore, an institution in which all good Catholics ought to take a great interest; and yet it must be said, with shame, it is very little thought of, and very badly supported amongst us. This society is the great support of the Catholic missions all over the world; wherever work is being done, its aid is given. Hundreds of toiling priests who are fighting the battles of the Cross in far countries—aye, and carrying the cross themselves in hunger and thirst and cold—are mainly supported in their arduous work by the funds of the Propagation; and these funds are not the magnificent donations of the rich, but, generally speaking, the small offerings of the Catholic poor, raised chiefly by weekly contributions of one halfpenny! This society, more than anything else, gives us the means of knowing what is going on in the Church—of taking to heart her Catholicity, seeing how she does her work in uncivilized countries, and accommodates herself to all races of men. The "Annals of the Propagation," which are published every few months, tell us what is doing in China and Japan, America and Australia, from the burning deserts of Africa to the Arctic zone; everywhere they tell us of the victories of the Catholic Church, as well as the sufferings and zeal of her ministers. And yet how few of us take much interest? We in England know very little about it all, and are chiefly taken up with our own affairs; we contribute very little, and, indeed, in many cases are not ashamed to take a great deal more than we give. Does not this look as if we wanted to hear a little more about the Catholicity of the Church, and to be reminded that Catholic is not a mere name, but a glorious title which involves sympathy and union with brethren over all the earth?

I must now say something about the last of the great "notes" of the Church: she is apostolic. This title and quality almost necessarily, and of its own idea, goes with the title of Catholic. Nothing is Catholic which is not apostolical, since to the Apostles alone our Lord said: "Go and teach *all* nations." They are the root, and on them all the branches must depend; nothing can affect all the branches, or be found in all the branches, which does not proceed from the root. How is it possible for any doctrine which does not spring from the Apostles to be found throughout the Church? Take, for example, the Real Presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, or of the forgiveness of sins in Penance, and ask: Is it possible that these doctrines should have been

found in every part of the Catholic Church and yet not be the doctrine of the Apostles? Could they, by any possibility, have been introduced at any later period? We may well, then, lay down as a general rule that what is Catholic is also apostolic.

The Catechism says: "The Church is apostolic, because she holds the doctrines and traditions of the Apostles, and because, through the unbroken succession of the pastors, she derives her Orders and her mission from them." There are, then, three things that come from the Apostles—doctrine, order, and mission.

There can be no new doctrine: everything which we are called upon to believe must come down to us from the Apostles, and have its authority from them. We are, as St. Paul tells us, "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, framed together, groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. ii. 20). To have our Lord as the "corner-stone," we must be built up upon the foundation of the Apostles. St. Jerome says: "Whosoever thou art that art a broacher of new dogmas, I beseech thee, spare the ears of the Romans: spare that faith that was commended by an Apostle's voice. Why, at the expiration of four hundred years, attempt to teach us what we before knew not? Why bring forward what Peter and Paul would not make known? Until this day the Christian world was without this doctrine. . . . I will lay before you a brief and plain sentiment of my mind; we are to abide in that Church, which, being founded by the Apostles, endured unto this day. Whenever you hear those who are said to be Christ's, named, not after the Lord Jesus, but after some one else—as, for example, Marcionites, Valentinians, men of the mountain, or of the plain—know that it is not Christ's Church, but the synagogue of Antichrist. From this very fact that they were instituted at a later period, they evince themselves to be those whom the Apostle foretold were to be. Nor let them feel satisfield with themselves if they affirm what they say from portions of the Scriptures, since even the devil spoke some things out of the Scriptures; and the Scriptures do not consist in being read, but in being understood" (*Faith of Catholics*, vol. i. 281).

This is a long passage, but a very importat one, since it shows that in the fourth century, as well as in the nineteenth, the one test of the truth of doctrine was its apostolic origin. By doctrine, we do not mean merely dry forms of words, definitions, texts, and so forth, but we mean all that practical teaching which gives life and meaning to dogma. Generally speaking, forms of words will not by themselves bring home to men the real spirit of any doctrine; we learn its meaning, to a large extent, from

custom, from the ordinary language of the faithful concerning it, and the place it takes in the habits of daily life. We see how our fathers received a doctrine and acted upon it; it was not to them a dead form of words, but made part of their lives, and the effect it had on them is our teaching. If we had never known how the Church had acted with regard to the Blessed Eucharist, what had been her practical directions and daily customs, and the thoughts and feelings of her children about it, we should have had very little notion of the doctrine; it would have been rather a dead form of words than a living reality.

It is precisely this sort of teaching that comes down to us from the Apostles: "Hold the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and in the love which is in Christ Jesus. Keep the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us" (II. Tim. i. 13). This was what the Church received from the Apostles: the form of sound words, and the practical lesson of how these mere words were to become living truths.

By apostolic doctrine and practice, we mean not merely doctrine *like* that of the Apostles, but doctrine directly *coming* from the Apostles—doctrine which descends straight and without break from their teaching. It is easy for people to imagine that they are teaching something that resembles the doctrine of the Apostles, or that they are restoring apostolic usage, and coming back to primitive ways; but that is, at the best, only imitation of the Apostles, and not descent from them. If the direct descent is once broken, and a doctrine or practice has to be re-introduced, it can no longer claim the authority of the Apostles, but is now a new thing, which must look to its authors for whatever credit it can obtain.

The doctrine of the Church is apostolic, because she first received it from the Apostles—it is the "faith once delivered to the saints"—and also because it has been, through all ages, watched over by apostolic authority. It is not enough to say that it had its origin in the teaching of the Apostles; there must be some continuance of the apostolic power, and it is the permanent presence of the Apostles in the See of St. Peter which gives us a security for the apostolic character of the teaching of the Church.

But we derive not only doctrine from the Apostles, but also order and mission. Order signifies the powers of the priesthood which our Lord gave to the Apostles. Jesus chose out the twelve, and gave to them certain distinct spiritual and supernatural powers, which were to be transmitted by them to their successors. The Apostles were the sole channel of these powers,

and no one can now possess them who has not received them in direct line from the Apostles. If the communication of power from the Apostles is interrupted, the powers of the priesthood must necessarily cease. It is like the electric current, which stops at once, the moment the connecting wire is broken.

The power of order is the special treasure which our Lord chose to give to His Church: He alone could give it, and He alone is able to preserve it. He gave it, and He watches over it by His peculiar providence, that it may never be lost—that the communication may never be broken, and the visible sign of this watchfulness is the constant and visible succession of Pontiffs in the chair of Peter. This is the great chain which unites the Church of the nineteenth century to that of the Apostles, and gives to each individual in communion with the Holy See a security that he is sharing in the graces given by apostolical succession.

[In these Sermons I have tried to avoid controversy, which, perhaps, makes them appear rather vague. I have treated the subject of the authority and marks of the Church at greater length and more accurately in the "Credentials of the Catholic Church" (Washbourne, Paternoster Row).]

SERMON XXIX.

All Saints.

"After this I saw a great multitude, that no one could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne" (Apoc. vii. 9).

WE have now come, my dear brethren, to a very beautiful and touching feast—All Saints' Day. This feast puts before us the whole Catholic Church, in all its parts, united together in the Communion of Saints. The Church militant in every region of this earth is raising its heart and voice to that kingdom where God reigns with His saints; and the faithful on earth, if we may say so, join hands with their blessed brethren in heaven. We magnify and praise God for the glory He has given to His saints, and try to unite our voices to their song of praise, whilst they pray to God for us; and, no sooner has the first song of praise in honour of the triumphant Church ceased, than we turn to our other brethren of the Church suffering, and with one accord we pray our Heavenly Father to bring them speedily to their eternal home. "Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them." The three parts of God's Universal Church are here most vividly represented, and are united together by that bond in which "communion" consists—the bond of sympathy and love, and union in prayer before the throne of God, as members of one body in Jesus Christ.

"By the Communion of Saints," the Catechism tells us, "we mean that all members of the Church, in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory, are in communion with each other, as being one body in Jesus Christ," and that "the faithful on earth are in communion with each other by professing the same faith, obeying the same authority, and assisting each other with their prayers and good works." "We are in communion with the saints in heaven by honouring them as the glorified members of the Church, and also by our praying to them, and by their praying for us." We are in communion with the souls in purgatory, by helping them with our prayers and good works. "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins" (II. Macc. xii. 46).

These answers explain to us exactly what we mean by those words which we so often repeat: "The Communion of Saints," and the object of the feast we now celebrate is to put this com-

munion so vividly before us that it may not be mere words, but a living and consoling truth. "Oh, how glorious is the kingdom in which the saints rejoice with Christ, and, clad in white robes, follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth!" These are the words which are constantly in the Church's mouth during this feast, and truly the kingdom of heaven seems to lie open before us. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard" its beauties, and yet the Holy Scripture is full of passages which seem to bring its glories for a moment before our eyes. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated, and His train filled the temple: upon it stood the seraphim. . . . . And they cried one to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of Hosts: all the earth is full of His glory. And the lintels of the doors were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." "And the Ancient of days sat: His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like clean wool: His throne like flames of fire, and the wheels of it like burning fire. A swift stream of fire issued forth from before him: thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him." "And behold there was a throne set in heaven, and One sitting upon the throne. And He that sat was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine-stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four-and-twenty ancients sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. And the four living creatures had each of them six wings, and, round about and within, they are full of eyes, and they rested not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, and who was, and who is, and who is to come. And when these living creatures gave glory, and honour, and benediction to Him that sitteth on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four-and-twenty ancients fell down before Him that sitteth upon the throne, and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honour, and power, because Thou has created all things: and for Thy will they were and have been created" (Isaias vi. 1; Dan. vii. 9; Apoc. iv. 2).

Such, my dear brethren, is the throne of God, as represented to us in the Holy Scriptures—the throne of God, which no mortal eye can ever see—the throne of God, from which proceeds everything that creatures possess, even their very being, and in the presence of which all creatures are "as if they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity'

(Isaias xl. 17). Of His fulness they all have received, and their brightest glory is but the faint shadow of His infinite perfection. "And His train filled the temple." Who can imagine to himself the countless legions of angels that surround the throne of God? "Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him." Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, thrones and denominations, each reflecting the glory of his Creator, and differing from one another "as star differeth from star in glory," for "there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars" (I. Cor. xv. 41).

But we have specially to consider, on this day, the glory of the saints—that is, of those who were once our own brethren on earth, who were of our own race, who had to fight the battle we must all fight, and who have won the crown for which we are now striving. And let us first think of the glory of our Blessed Mother Mary: as Mother of God she is exalted above created things, and is Queen of angels and of saints. St. John Chrysostom says: "A great wonder, indeed, was Blessed Mary ever Virgin. What has ever been, or ever can be, greater and more illustrious than she?—in her grandeur she has surpassed heaven and earth. What more holy than she? Not the prophets, not the Apostles, not the martyrs, not the patriarchs: neither angels nor thrones nor dominations, neither cherubim nor seraphim; nor is there to be found amongst created things, visible or invisible, anything greater or more excellent than she. She is the handmaid of God, and, at the same time, His Mother: she is both Virgin and Mother. She is the Mother of Him who was born of the Father before the beginning of all things, whom angels and men acknowledge as Lord of all. Wouldst thou know how greatly this Virgin is exalted above the heavenly powers? They stand before Him with fear and trembling, veiling their faces: she offers the human race to Him whom she brought forth" (*Breviary Lesson*).

Around the Mother of Jesus are gathered representatives of the human race which He redeemed. Here is the glorious company of the Apostles, to whom our Lord promised that "they should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." They are the leaders of that heavenly army, and all the nations of the earth are enrolled under their standards: they are the reapers who went out to the harvest with their sickles, and have brought home their sheaves: "Going, they went and wept casting their seeds; but coming, they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves" (Ps. cxxv. 6). With them are associated a host of apostolic men, who have shared in

their office on earth—the Apostles of many countries: St. Gregory and St. Augustine, of England; St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland; St. Boniface, of Germany; St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies, and numberless others, who have carried on the work of the Apostles of our own time. How grand and glorious will each one of these saints be as he offers to God the harvest of souls which comes in from the fields which he watered with his tears, and, perhaps, consecrated by his blood! And here stands the white-robed army of martyrs, with their palm branches of victory—who, because they have fought the good fight and gained the crown by their own blood, have a special claim to be heard on behalf of their brethren: "And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O God, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? and white stoles were given to each one of them, and they were told that they should rest yet a little time till their fellow-servants and their brethren, who were to be slain even as they, should be filled up" (Apoc. vi. 10).

Apostles and martyrs, confessors and virgins, stand in their companies around the throne: saints of every rank and degree, whose sanctity shed lustre on the thrones of Kings, or shone forth from the poor garments of beggars, what matters it now? Saints who have for ages been the patterns of mankind, and whose names have been ever in men's mouths, and, perhaps, just as many saints of whom the world knew nothing, and whom God alone understood. All these, the chiefs and heroes of the heavenly army, we celebrate on this day.

But heaven is not made up of heroic souls—they are not all chieftains and heroes in that host: "And after this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne, and in the sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: and they cried with a loud voice, saying: 'Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.' . . . . These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in the temple: and He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell over them. They shall not hunger nor thirst any more: neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall rule them, and lead them to the fountains of the waters of life: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Apoc. vii. 9).

This "great crowd, that no man could number," is the special object of our devotion on this day. They, my brethren, are

now the saints reigning with Christ; but once they were like ourselves. They were, most of them, not heroes, but ordinary Christians, living the very same lives that we do; they neither worked miracles nor saw visions; they got to heaven by no unusual path, but had to toil along the ordinary road with ourselves. They had, perhaps, the same hard and commonplace work to attend to, the same temptations to resist and dangers to fear; they were fathers and mothers of families, tradesmen and artizans, servants and masters. They fell into sin and repented —they went to confession and Communion as we do, and, perhaps, knelt at our own altar—and now they are "the saints reigning with Christ."

If we did but know the secret history of some of these souls—who and what they were on earth, and how they contrived to save their souls—how many trials they had to bear, and how God helped them in all—we should be wonderfully encouraged. How often did they seem to "faint in the way," and, perhaps, fall under "the burden of the day and the heats;" they were, perhaps, again and again, ready to despair, the weight of the cross and the storm of temptation seemed more than flesh and blood could bear, but God's grace was found sufficient for them, and "virtue was made perfect in infirmity." They were in the midst of sin, and lived, it may be, surrounded by all the allurements and abominations of the enemy, and, perhaps, they fell, but God's hand raised them up and kept them, and now there is not on them even the odour of the fire through which they have passed. On earth, perhaps, they complained as we do, and thought their lot hard and their trials excessive, but now every one of them cries out with St Paul that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (Romans viii. 18).

What matters it now that they were poor and despised whilst on earth? that they had to bear hardship and sickness, hunger and thirst? that, perhaps, they did not know where to lay their heads? These things were hard and bitter to them once, as they are to us, but now they are, like the troubled dream of a moment, swallowed up in a joyful awakening.

And how did all these saints get to heaven? They had the very same means that we have, and no others. God's revelation and the Church's guidance was the same, for, "Thou, O God, endurest for ever, and Thy memorial to all generations" (Ps. ci. 13). The enemies they had to fight against were the same: the devil, the world, and the flesh did not spare them any more than they spare us; they had the same sacraments

that we have, and had to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. ii. 12).

They got to heaven by patience—they persevered, they prayed, they resisted, it may be, "even unto blood fighting against sin." Their motto was: "My soul hath relied on His word, my soul hath hoped in the Lord: from the morning watch even until night let Israel hope in the Lord." "Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him, the salvation of my countenance and my God" (Ps. xlii. 6). Let us look up to heaven and follow them in this path of patience; they are our brethren, our relations, it may be our parents, brothers, and sisters, or, perhaps, our intimate friends, and they call on us to walk in their footsteps, and encourage us to fight the good fight, as they have done, that we may one day share in their crowns.

Oh, how varied is that blessed crowd of "all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues!" How widely different was their state on earth! Here all the nations are represented, and, as it were, the history of mankind is told. Here are men of ancient times, lords of the world in their day, Greeks and Romans, and all the representatives of the older civilization, and the barbarous nations that succeeded them; the ages of faith produced their thousands of simple souls; the deserts sent forth their solitaries, and the cloister its monks; Kings and soldiers, gallant hosts of Crusaders, it may be, labourers and mechanics, poor slaves and the outcasts of men, all come to swell the numbers of that happy assembly.

A thousand differences of race and language, prejudice and education, divided them on earth; but all these are now swept away. The rich join hands with the poor, the learned are united in fellowship with the ignorant; "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, for they are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28). They are now one family, standing around one throne, all "inebriated with the plenty of God's house, and all made to drink of the torrent of His pleasure (Ps. xxxv. 9).

How unlike, too, were they in their history! The penitent sinner, whom the Good Shepherd brought home after long wanderings, is to be found there, and those who have scarcely sullied their baptismal innocence; holy souls who, "being made perfect in a short space, fulfilled a long time," and servants who have borne the burden of the day and the heat. There is place for all characters and dispositions; for Peter and John, for Martha and Mary. How unlike, and yet how like! Every soul in that great assembly was redeemed by the sovereign merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, and bought, not with "cor-

ruptible gold and silver, but with the Precious Blood of Christ" (I. St. Peter i. 18).

They have all washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and all raise their voices to Him in thankfulness, "because Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood out of every tribe and tongue, and people and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom" (Apoc. v. 9). They were, moreover, all alike in this, that whatever may have been their lives, when Christ called them they were found watching. Each of them was found ready with his wedding garment, and his light burning in his hand. "Let your loins be girded and lamps burning in your hands" (St. Luke xii. 35). In this way alone can men enter into the kingdom of God.

With this glorious army we are in communion; we do not look at them as we do at the stars, which are beyond our reach. They are our brethren and fellow-servants, and there is a constant interchange of prayer and blessing, like the angels whom Jacob saw ascending and descending between heaven and earth.

The glorious Communion of Saints seems redoubled on this day and whilst the hymns of joy are still lingering in our ears, we hear the solemn words, "Eternal rest give to them, O Lord," and a new division of the Universal Church is before us—the realm of sadness and patience—the Church of the holy souls in purgatory.

I will conclude with an extract from the saint whose feast we celebrate to-morrow—a saint of our own country of the seventh century—the Venerable Bede. The beauty and authority of his words may well complete what I have been able to say on this feast:

Dearly beloved brethren: This day we keep, with one great cry of joy, a feast in memory of all God's holy children—His children whose presence is a gladness to heaven—His children whose prayers are a blessing to earth—His children whose victories are the crown of the Holy Church—His chosen, whose testifying is the more glorious in honour, as the agony in which it was given was the sterner in intensity, for as the dreader grew the battle, so the grander grew the fighters, and the triumph of martyrdom waxed the more incisive by the multiplicity of suffering; and the heavier the torment, the heavier the prize. And it is our Mother the Catholic Church, spread out far and wide through all this planet, it is she that hath learnt, in Christ Jesus her head, not to fear shame, nor cross, nor death, but waxed lealer and lealer, and, not by fighting, but by enduring, hath breathed into all that noble band who have come up to the

bitter starting-post, the hope of conquest and glory which hath warmed them manfully to accept the race.

Of a verity, thou art blessed, O my Mother the Church! The blaze of God's mercy beateth full upon thee; thine adornment is the glorious blood of victorious martyrs, and thy raiment the virgin whiteness of untarnished orthodoxy. Thy garlands lack neither roses nor lilies.

And now, dearly beloved brethren, let each one of us strive to gain the goodly crown of one sort or the other, either the glistening whiteness of purity or the red dye of suffering. In the army of heaven peace and war have both chaplets of their own, to crown Christ's soldiers withal.

Moreover, to this also hath the unutterable and boundless goodness of God seen, that He spreadeth not the time of working and wrestling, neither maketh it long nor everlasting, and, as it were, but for a moment: so that in this short and scanty life there is wrestling and working, but the crown and the prize is in a life which is eternal. So the work is soon over, but the wage is paid for ever. And when the night of this world is over, the saints are to see the clearness of the essential light, and to receive a blessedness outweighing the pangs of any torment, as testifieth the Apostle Paul when he saith: "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18).

Oh, with what a passion of welcome doth the land above receive them that are coming home from the battle, and go forth to meet them that bear the spoils of the downtrodden foe! The men who walk in the procession of victory are mingled with women who have conquered world and weakness together, and there are also damsels and lads who have understood more than the ancients, because they have kept the precepts of the Eternal. But, besides these, there is another great host, who will have an entry into the everlasting palace, even they who have kept pure the unity of the faith in the bond of peace, and the unshaken observance of the commandments given us from heaven.

Come now, therefore, my brethren, and let us enter upon the way; let us turn our faces homeward and heavenward, towards that land wherein our names are written down, and we are citizens elect. We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God (Eph. ii. 19); yea, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 17). Bravery can open, and lealty keep wide, the entry for us into that city. Let us think, then, for a while what is the brilliant happiness of that city—that is to say, as well as we can, for what it really is no words can utter.

Concerning that city is written in a certain place: "Sorrow and mourning shall flee away." What can be more blessed than that life wherein poverty will not threaten, nor sickness weaken? There, there will be no hurts and no angering. There, there will be no envying; there will burn no covetousness, no ambition of honour or seeking of power will give trouble there. There, the devil will no more be an object of fear; there, no evil spirits lie in wait; the dread of hell will be gone there. There, there will be no death either for the body or for the soul, but life glorious in the gifts of immortality.

There, there will never be any differences, but all things attained, all things suiting, for all the saints will be at one together, peace and gladness reigning over all things. All things there will be quiet and still, and the glory exceeding great—not such as any glory now, but as much more excelling in splendour as it excelleth in blessing, even as it is written that that "city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (Apoc. xxi. 23). And in that light the saints "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that have turned many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3).

By reason of that light there will be no night there, nor darkness there. There no clouds will ever gather. No cold will bite there; there no heat will scorch. But, instead thereof, there will be for ever such an order as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man" (I. Cor. ii. 9), saving them who are found worthy to be there, "whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. iv. 3), who "have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night" (Apoc. vii. 14). There, there will be no growing old, nor any of the distresses of age, but "all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13).

But, in truth, besides these things, will be companionship with the hosts of angels and archangels; to enjoy the fellowship of thrones and dominions, of principalities and powers, and all the forces of heaven; to gaze upon the armies of the saints, glittering as stars glitter not here. Patriarchs radiant in faith realized, prophets rejoicing in hope crowned, Apostles judging the twelve tribes of Israel, martyrs flashing in the red crowns of their victory, virgins crowned with white chaplets, dancing in companies, bearing garlands of snowy whiteness.

Therefore, may it be our delight to go on to this prize of good

living. Freely and cheerfully let us strive in the race, running under the eyes of God and Christ. We have already taken a station above floating and earthly things, and let us allow no love for things fleeting to hamper our running. If the last day shall find us lithe and speedful in the race of good living, we shall never have to complain that our Master is a scanty rewarder of our works. He that giveth a red crown for suffering under persecution, the same giveth a white crown to them that, under peace, prevail in battles of righteousness. Neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob were slain, and, nevertheless, in honour for faith and righteousness, they have gained the first place amongst the patriarchs, and it is to sit down with them in the kingdom of God, that are gathered the faithful, the righteous, and the praiseworthy. We must remember that it is God's will, and not our own will, that we must do, for he that doeth His will abideth for ever.

Wherefore, dearly beloved brethren, with mind clear, faith firm, courage true, love thorough, let us be ready to do whatever God willeth, keeping stoutly all the Commandments of the Lord, having innocency in simplicity, peaceableness in love, modesty in lowliness; in ministering, diligence; in helping them that toil, watchfulness; in succouring the poor, mercifulness: in standing up for the truth, firmness; in keeping of discipline, sternness; lest we be found wanting in any good work. These are the steps which the saints, who have already gone home, have left marked for us, that we may be able to keep in their footprints, and so to follow them into their joy" *(Brev. Lessons, Marquis of Bute's translation).*

SERMON XXX.

The Holy Souls.

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me" (Job xix. 21).

On the day of the Holy Souls, my dear brethren, it seems as if the cry for help were sent up from every churchyard—the cry of parents, relatives, and of a vast crowd of the faithful departed, calling upon their brethren on earth for sympathy and assistance. And how does the Church on earth respond? On All Souls' Day, in some Catholic countries, the cemeteries are thronged with mourners, and garlands of flowers, and wreaths and crosses, are lovingly laid on the graves of the dead; children go to pray over the tombs of their parents; fathers and mothers to visit the place where their little children are laid, and the living and the dead seem, for a moment, once more united.

But it is not a mere celebration to bring back the memory of the dead. It would be but a poor and empty thing if it were merely to honour the ashes of those who are gone, and to renew unavailing sorrow in the hearts of the living. In the Catholic Church the love of friends takes a more active and reasonable form; we mourn for our deceased brethren, that we may help them; and recall their memory, that we may excite ourselves to pray for them more diligently. The churches are crowded, and everywhere the voice of supplication and intercessory prayer is raised to heaven for the souls of the faithful. First comes the solemn public commemoration of all the faithful departed on the day following the Feast of All Saints; and this is followed by special Offices, both public and private, to ask the mercy of God for different individuals and classes of people. In most churches Mass is celebrated every year, at that time, for the deceased benefactors of the parish and diocese, and another Mass is said for all the departed members of each congregation; whilst at every Catholic cemetery a Mass is celebrated for those whose bodies are there deposited.

The whole month of November is dedicated to prayers for the dead, prayers for the faithful in general—for deceased Bishops and clergy, for parents, friends, and benefactors, for those who have died during the past year, for those who have perished in war, or by sudden death of any kind. The faithful are en-

couraged at this time to make special remembrance of their own departed friends, to have Mass celebrated for them, or, at least, to offer up fervent prayer for the repose of their souls. It is not as if prayer for the dead was to be confined to this month; the subject is brought before us specially, that we may be reminded of the duty of praying diligently at all times for the faithful departed.

Let us turn our minds, then, to the Holy Souls, to consider their state and their claims upon us, that we may worthily enter into the feelings of Holy Church at this season. The souls in purgatory, the Church suffering, constitutes one great division of the Universal Church of God. It is the realm of darkness and suffering, but, at the same time, of patience, hope, and love; it is the kingdom where God's justice and mercy are both most conspicuously displayed. How vast is this realm! We cannot picture to ourselves the number of its inhabitants; they seem to us like the sands on the sea-shore, of all ages and from all countries; like the blessed in heaven, they are of all "nations and tribes, and peoples and tongues." Of all who die, how few there are that are fit to pass at once into the presence of the All-holy God—how few there are who in life have "paid the last farthing" that was owed to His justice! A few holy people there are are, perhaps, who on earth so watch over their own hearts, and love God so much, that they have contracted no debt to be paid hereafter, and a few who lead lives of penance and patient suffering, and so bear the pains of purgatory in this life; these have entered at once into the kingdom of God, but the great mass, even of good people, leave much to be corrected, and many debts to be paid: "The fire shall try every man's work," and "he shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

These suffering souls, although the hand of God has touched them, and is still heavy upon them, are most dear to Him. They are called the Holy Souls, because they are confirmed for ever in the favour of God; they are not yet the saints, because the stain and burden of sin still rests upon them, and keeps them from the enjoyment of God's presence, but they are already perfect in His love. On earth they had many failings and weaknesses; their hearts were not altogether right with God, and even the best of their works were alloyed with human infirmity. They gave too much of their hearts to creatures, or were wrapped up in themselves, and "made subject to vanity," and so the perfect love of God was obscured; but now all this is past, and there is nothing to come between the creature and his Creator. No one on earth can love God so perfectly as these Holy Souls now love Him, because none can see Him so clearly;

no one can do His will with such absolute submission and patience as they do.

"The fire shall try each man's work." We do not know what this fire will be which God has appointed to complete the purification of these chosen souls, and make them fit for His kingdom; but we know that the "judgments of the Lord are a great abyss," and must be ever terrible to His creatures. "I am He that searcheth the reins and the heart, and I will give to every one of you according to your works" (Apoc. ii. 23). "Who shall be able to think of the day of His coming? and who shall stand to see Him? for He is like a refining fire, and like the fuller's herb. And He shall sit refining and cleansing the silver, and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and He shall refine them as gold and as silver" (Mal. iii. 2).

The Catholic Church does not teach us anything definite, either about the nature or the duration of the pains of purgatory; but, for all we can tell, the punishment of sin there may be more severe and more prolonged than anything we have to endure in this life: we only know that in God's sight "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years," and "that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. x. 31).

And now, my dear brethren, let me say a few words once again on the doctrine of purgatory and the explanation of it, since a clear idea of the faith must be the foundation of all true devotion. The Church teaches that all who die in a state of grace will be saved—that is, that all who are not entirely cut off from the favour and friendship of God at the hour of death will, sooner or later, enter into the kingdom of God. At the same time it teaches that "God will render to every one according to his work," and that 'every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it in the day of judgment" (St. Matt. xii. 36.): she teaches also that "nothing defiled shall enter heaven" but that "the fire shall try each man's work,"—that is, that all the imperfections and sins of a man's life must, in some way, be purified and atoned for before he can be admitted to the vision of God.

From this teaching it is evident that there must be "a place where souls suffer for a time after death on account of their sins." It is impossible, as far as we can see, that God can render to every man according to his works in this life: certainly He does not appear to do so in the ordinary course of His Providence. It stands to common sense, therefore, that there must be some time and place where the inequalities which strike us so much here on earth shall be redressed, and where the rigour and ex-

actitude of God's justice may be vindicated. There must be some place where years of sin and carelessness may be atoned, and where the patient suffering of the just shall be seen to avail. Because men are faithful servants of God, He does not overlook their sins ; on the contrary, nothing is more striking in the Holy Scriptures than the severity with which God punished even small faults committed by His servants. He punished them, that He might have mercy on them, and this is the ordinary course of His justice, for, as St. Paul says: "Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth; and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. xii. 6).

Our Lord Himself points out the distinction between the greater and the lesser punishment—the punishment due to rebellion, and the punishment due to mere carelessness: "And the servant who knew the will of his Lord and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (St. Luke xii. 47).

Without the doctrine of a place of temporal punishment, it is impossible to form to ourselves any intelligible idea of the dealings of God with His creatures, or to reconcile the obvious facts of life with the emphatic declaration we so constantly meet —that God will render to every man according to his works. It constantly happens that we lay our departed brethren in the grave, and, with great confidence in the mercy of God, we hope for their salvation : yet we cannot shut our eyes to the faults they have committed. We cannot fail to see that their lives have been very imperfect, and, perhaps, sinful and scandalous, and that they have done very little for God's service, and very little to atone for their errors : Are we to believe that they have at once passed from a most imperfect life here into the everlasting enjoyment of God? No ; such an idea is contrary to all that God has told us of His judgments; but we may still hope for such a one that he will "be saved yet so as by fire."

But people sometimes object that this doctrine is not explicitly laid down in the Holy Scriptures: let us see what they do say. First, the passage of St. Paul, from which I have already quoted ; "other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. Now, if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble ; every man's work shall be manifest: for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire, and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward: if any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but

he himself shall be saved yet so as by fire" (I. Cor. iii. 11). It is difficult to conceive any plainer indication of purgatory: St. Paul is obviously speaking, not of the reprobate, but of the just—of those who have built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. He is also speaking, not of the present time, but of the day of the Lord, when the building is completed, and is to be tried, and he plainly tells us that defects will be found which must be purged by fire. What else can he mean by "he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire"?

We will now take a text from the Old Testament, from the history of Judas Macchabeus: "And the day following Judas came with his company to take away the bodies of them that were slain, and to bury them with their kinsmen in the sepulchres of their fathers. And they found under the coats of the slain some of the donaries of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbiddeth to the Jews, so that all plainly saw that for this cause they were slain. Then they all blessed the just judgment of the Lord, who had discovered the things that were hidden. And so, betaking themselves to prayers, they besought him that the sin which had been committed might be forgotten. But the most valiant Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, for as much as they saw before their eyes what had happened because of the sins of those that were slain, and, making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection. For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead. And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them. It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sin" (II. Mach. xii. 46).

This passage, my dear brethren, as I dare say you well know, is taken from a book which Protestants do not receive as part of the Holy Scripture; nobody, however, doubts that it is authentic, and that it describes to us the belief of the Jews at the time just before our Lord's coming. The Jews, then, believed that it was "a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead." Their departed brethren might still be helped, and, by prayer, freed from the bonds of sin, in which they were detained, and, therefore, it was a duty to pray for them, "that they may be loosed from sins." Now, let us see what Christians thought when the Church was first established. Tertullian, almost the earliest Father of the Latin Church, tells us their practice; he speaks of a woman whose husband is dead, and

says: "Wherefore, also, does she pray for his soul, and begs for him in the interim refreshment, and in the first resurrection companionship, and offers on the anniversary days of his falling asleep." The doctrine he sums up in these words: "Briefly, since we understand by that *prison*, which the Gospel points out, the places below, and the *last farthing* we interpret to be any small delinquency to be there expiated by a delay of resurrection; no one will doubt that the soul makes some amends in the places below, without the fulness of the resurrection by the flesh also." Origen, the great writer of the Greek Church, who lived about the same time, says: "For this cause therefore he that is saved is *saved by fire*, that if he happen to have anything of the nature of lead commingled with him, *that* the fire may burn and melt away, that all men may become pure gold, because the gold of the land which the saints are to possess is said to be pure; and, *as the furnace tryeth gold, so doth temptation try the just.* All therefore must come to the fire, all must come to the furnace. *For the Lord sits and refines, and He shall purify the sons of Juda.* But, also, when we shall have come to that place, if one shall have brought many good works, and some little iniquity, that little is melted away and purified in the fire like lead, and all remains pure gold" (*Faith of Catholics*, vol. iii. pp. 145, 146, 147).

The same author, in another place, says more explicitly: "There are other sins which, when we commit them in ignorance, there is, I believe, decreed and prepared for us, by the command of God, a place where we must dwell for a certain time" (p. 149). And now let us see what was the custom of the Church two centuries later. St Cyril of Jerusalem, in the fourth century, says: "Then, also, we commemorate those who have fallen to sleep before us: first, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, that God, by their prayers and intercessions, would receive our petition; then, also, on behalf of the holy Fathers and Bishops who who have fallen asleep before us, and of all, in short, that have already fallen asleep amongst us, believing that it will be a very great assistance to the souls for which the supplication is put up, while the holy and most awful Sacrifice lies open to view" (p. 162).

But the voice of the early Church is most emphatically heard in the language of the ancient liturgies, which are still in use in various parts of the world, both in and out of the communion of the Catholic Church. These liturgies all agree in offering up prayers for the dead. In the Roman Mass we say every day: "Be mindful also, O Lord, of Thy servants and handmaids N. and N., who are gone before us with the sign of faith, and

sleep in the sleep of peace. Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to them, and all that rest in Christ, a place of refreshment, light, and peace, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

The Eastern liturgies make the same petition in similar words. For example, the Coptic liturgy has this prayer: "Be mindful also, O Lord, of all those who have gone to sleep and rest, in the priesthood and in every rank of the laity. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to give to their souls rest in the bosom of holy Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; lead them unto a verdant place by the waters of refreshment, into the paradise of delight, into the place whence sorrow, grief, and lamentation are banished away in the light of the saints" (*Faith of Catholics*, vol. iii. p. 204).

I have given these passages from early writers, not by way of *proof* of the existence of purgatory; the only one thing which is sufficient proof for any doctrine is the teaching of the Catholic Church, and that is sufficient by itself. The Church teaches it now, and by that we know that she always taught it, and received it from her Divine Founder. All other testimonies are not for ourselves, but for others. Protestants fancy that the doctrine of purgatory is a new thing, whereas it was clearly known amongst the Jews before our Lord's coming, is confirmed by very strong passages of Holy Scripture, and is plainly seen in every age of the Church's history.

And now let us return to the practical and devotional part of the subject which this season presents to us. The Holy Souls are, as we have said, dear to God, and they ought also to be very dear to us. They are specially our brethren, and many of them but a short time since were sharing our earthly trials. There is not one of us, I suppose, who would not find in that vast assemblage many of his own family, his parents, perhaps, or his own personal friends, those whose faces are still familiar to his eyes, and whose voices still sound in his ears. How closely have we been connected with many who are now in purgatory! how important a part they played in our lives! They were instructors and benefactors; they loved us on earth, and perhaps worked hard to do us good; year after year we saw their faces around us; side by side we knelt in the Church of God; together we shared in all the joy and sorrow of this life; and now they are gone and we are remaining—they are suffering for their sins, and we—are we doing much for them, or have we forgotten them?

Would that we could realize the state of the faithful departed! It is a condition of patient love, suffering and helplessness; they stand on the very brink of eternal rest and happiness, and yet they cannot reach it. After all the pains and dangers of exile,

they have reached their true home, and the door is fast shut against them. They have seen their Creator face to face, and now their hearts can never rest until they can enjoy the vision of Him for ever. Who can conceive the longing which the Christian soul will feel during the painful time of separation! "As the hart panteth after fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the Strong, Living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God? My tears have been my bread, day and night, whilst it is said to me daily, 'Where is thy God?'" (Ps. xli. 2).

But it is not merely the absence of joy, it is the fire which tries and purifies the soul, and they have to pass through it, and bear its pains; the burning love of God which possessed them, the ardent desires by which they are consumed, the angelic purity and patience which they display in the midst of their pain, are all insufficient to ward off one drop of that fiery torrent.

In pains beyond all earthly pains,
Favourites of Jesus there they lie,
Letting the fire burn out their stains,
And worshipping God's purity.
Spouses of Christ they are, for He
Was wedded to them by His Blood,
And angels o'er their destiny
In wondering adoration brood.

—*Father Faber.*

And in the midst of all this pain they turn to us for help: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me." Can we be indifferent to such an appeal?

But, first, let us consider how it is that we are able to help them when their condition is so much superior to ours. We are in the darkness, and they have gone out into the light; a thousand things which are obscure and perplexing to us, are clear as the noonday sun to them; they are holy, and we are sinners; they love God with the very love of the blessed in heaven, whilst our hearts are cold: how can we help them? It is true they have all these advantages, but there is one thing they have not—they have not access to the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the treasures of grace which He purchased for them. The time was when He put all His blessed merits into their hands, as He does into ours; they had the very key of the treasury, but they forgot to use it whilst they had it in their keeping, and now the night has come, "when no man could work."

Their time has now passed. All their hope is still in the Precious Blood of Jesus—that alone will bring them to their

eternal rest—but they cannot put out their hands to that Precious Treasure. They can do nothing for themselves, and all their patience and love are without the slightest merit in the sight of God: the little things they once did were precious before God, but the great things they now suffer are as nothing."

"Be at agreement with thy adversary whilst thou art in the way with him, lest, perhaps, the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing" (St. Matt. v. 25). Their time for mercy is past, and the day for justice has arrived: they are cast into prison, and must now pay the last farthing.

But, even in the midst of His severe justice, God is merciful, and He allows their brethren to come to their aid. Poor sinners as we are, we are not only allowed, but encouraged, to come forward and offer payment for them—not from anything which we can do ourselves, but from the treasures of Christ, which are still in our hands. It has pleased our Lord to make us one family, and, therefore, it is His will that we should be in a great measure dependent one on another. On earth a great proportion of God's mercies, both spiritual and temporal, comes to us through the hands of our brethren—and it is His will, that even after death, the power of mutual assistance should remain. When we pray for the dead, and endeavour to help them in discharging their heavy debt, we are the instruments of God's mercy, and we are carrying out His will, just as much as when we show charity to our brethren upon earth.

And, now, let us consider what is our duty to the souls of the faithful departed. We must take care, in the first place, not to forget them, or become indifferent to their welfare. Every day, not only in this month of November, but throughout the year, we ought to offer up, at least, one fervent prayer for the souls of the faithful. To remind us of this duty, the Church concludes almost every devotion with the ejaculation, "May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace." This is not a mere form, but is intended to keep the thought of the suffering Church always before us, that we may be earnest in helping the souls of the faithful.

God will certainly repay us for our charity in due season, "for with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (St. Matt. vii. 2). In a few years, or, indeed, in a few days, we ourselves may be in the midst of the Holy Souls, sharing their lot, and then we shall reap the reward of our charity, or, it may be, suffer the punishment of our negligence.

But we must remember that we can only aid them through

the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. He now gives Himself to us, and make us, in a measure, the dispensers of the treasures of His Precious Blood: in the Mass, where His Body and Blood are offered in sacrifice; in the Holy Communion, where we receive Him; in the indulgences granted by the Church; in every fervent prayer we offer up through Him, we become partakers of His merits. All these we may offer up for the souls of the faithful departed, and the Lord will receive our offering towards the payment of the debt they owe to His justice.

We must take care, however, to be ourselves in a state of grace; how shall we dare to intercede for our brethren, if we are not, at least, trying to be faithful servants? How can we think that our Lord will hear us for others if we are, ourselves, rebellious and ungrateful? Let us, then, love God with all our hearts, and serve Him with all our strength, and we maybe sure that He will hear us when we intercede for our brethren.

SERMON XXXI.

Prayers for the Dead.

"Amen I say to you, if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father who is in heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 19).

DURING this month of November, my dear brethren, there are not merely two or three "consenting together," but the whole Church on earth unites in prayer to obtain grace and pardon for our departed brethren; and we agree together in asking of our Common Father that which it is most pleasing to Him to grant—mercy for His own most beloved children. We cannot, then, doubt the great efficacy of the universal prayer for the dead, which is the special devotion of this month.

To join in prayer for the dead is a distinct duty; no one can put away from himself the general obligation of charity; he is bound to be charitable, and to help others in their necessities, by the very fact that God has placed him here on earth with other men, and so he is bound to be charitable to his departed brethren by the very fact that he is united to them by the Communion of Saints. If any one seriously neglects this duty, he is not only unkind, but is, in a sense, unjust, because he deprives the souls of the faithful of the succour they have a right to look for, and by which, perhaps, God meant them to be helped.

We will, therefore, to-day think a little more in detail of the different ways in which we may help the holy souls. And, first, let us go back to the consideration on which all our efforts must rest; we can only help the souls of the faithful as instruments of the Precious Blood of Christ. Everything we do must have its efficacy, not from our own deserving, but from the merits of our Lord; here on earth we are all, in a sense, "dispensers of the mysteries of God," since He has given Himself to us, and, with Himself, "has given us all things."

The most direct way in which we can apply the merits of Christ's Precious Blood for our brethren is by the Sacrifice of the Mass. Every priest at his ordination receives "power to offer sacrifice to God, and to celebrate Masses both for the living and the dead, in the name of the Lord;" and in every Mass a commemoration of the faithful departed is made at the most solemn moment. The Mass, however, may be applied in a much more definite way. Every Mass is said, first, for a

general intention—that is, for all the universal ends of Sacrifice Adoration, Thanksgiving, Praise, and Petition—and then, for some special and particular object which depends on the intention of the priest who celebrates the Mass.

In the Old Law sacrifices were ordained for all kinds of objects, both public and private; those who were in trouble and affliction, either for themselves or their friends, could come to the altar of God, and have their sacrifice offered for themselves and their special wants. So it is in the New Law also. We have, indeed, but one Sacrifice, but this one includes in itself all the ancient sacrifices, and is offered for all the objects for which they were offered. All these ancient sacrifices plainly had their efficacy from the Passion of our Lord, which was then to come; and men in general, and each individual for himself, might draw unceasingly on this one great fountain of salvation. All this, and much more, our Lord has given to Christians in the Sacrifice which He has provided for them. The very Sacrifice of Calvary is mystically renewed for their daily Sacrifice, and may be offered again and again, not only for the general wants of the Church, but for the private necessities and wishes of her children.

The Sacrifice which our Lord offered on the cross was one of infinite efficacy. He was Himself the Infinite God, and everything that He did and suffered for us had an infinite value. In the same way, the Sacrifice of the Mass is inexhaustible in its merits and efficacy. From this source, all the saints and all the servants of God have drawn, and, after all the immense favours and graces bestowed, the fountain is for ever overflowing. "You shall draw water in joy from the fountains of your Saviour," and "of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace."

There is no favour so great that we may not confidently ask it of God for the sake of this great sacrifice which he has put into our hands, either for ourselves or for others. He has given to us, if we may say so, a credit on which we may draw without limit.

The Sacrifice of the Cross was, as I have said, of infinite value, and yet the saving grace which men receive is determined by their capacity of receiving, and the diligence with which they apply it to their souls: and, in the same way, it is the will of God that the Eucharistic Sacrifice, although it is infinitely efficacious, should be to us a daily sacrifice, which we should offer again and again as our most powerful means of supplication; and He will give us, of its infinite treasures, according to our perseverance and capacities, and according to His own good pleasure.

You may, then, have Mass said for your own special intention, either for your own wants or for others, either for the living or

the dead, but you must do so in the way appointed by the Church—that is, by making the proper offering towards the support of the priest who offers the Sacrifice for you, for "they that serve the altar partake with the altar. So also the Lord hath ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel" (I. Cor. ix. 14).

Such things are not to be a matter of bargaining or of buying and selling, but the Church lays down what it is right and expedient for her ministers to receive and her children to give, just as in the Old Law, when Almighty God appointed what it was that the people should offer in sacrifice. They had to offer of their substance, and if they grudged their offering I think they received no blessing; and, in the same way, if you desire that God should receive the Sacrifice offered in your name, you must not grudge giving what the Church has settled as a fit and proper offering for you to make.

The most solemn way in which Mass is celebrated for the dead is when it is said with black vestments and the proper prayers for the souls of the faithful. There is one Mass for All Souls' Day, another for the day of death, or of the funeral, and another Mass for the anniversary of any one departed; it is also a pious custom to celebrate Mass for the dead on the third, seventh, and thirtieth day after the interment. Besides these special Masses, Masses may be said in black on any day, when no feast interferes, either for the souls of the faithful in general or for any person deceased. A Mass for the dead is, in substance, just the same as any other Mass, but wherever there is room, if we may say so, the Church raises her voice to apply the Holy Sacrifice for the refreshment, light, and peace of her children. "Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them;" and the prayer at the Offertory is: "O Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory, deliver the souls of all the faithful departed from the pains of hell, and from the deep pit: deliver them from the lion's mouth, that hell may not swallow them up, and that they may not fall into darkness; but may the holy standard-bearer, Michael, introduce them to the holy light, which Thou didst promise of old to Abraham and his seed. We offer to Thee, O Lord, sacrifice and prayers: do Thou receive them in behalf of those souls whom we commemorate this day; grant them, O Lord, to pass from death to that life which Thou didst promise of old to Abraham and his seed."

Again, at the *Agnus Dei*, although the Church so seldom changes the prayers of the solemn part of the Mass, she says: "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant them rest, grant them eternal rest." The Psalm *Judica me*,

Deus, and the *Gloria in excelsis* and the Creed are omitted, and in place of them the *Dies Iræ* is recited. This is the Church's most beautiful and plaintive hymn to the Judge of the living and the dead, begging for mercy in the hour of death and judgment:

"Recordare Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuæ viæ,
Ne me perdas illa die."

"Jesus, my God! to Thee I pray,
O save me in that dreadful day,
By all Thou didst for me."

By these special prayers a wail of mourning is introduced even into the Eucharistic Sacrifice—a cry of sadness, indeed, but also of loving confidence; and the Precious Body and Blood of our Lord are offered up to God for the faithful departed, accompanied by the most earnest and touching petitions from His Church on earth.

But Masses for the dead are not always said in black, with the proper prayers for the occasion; these can only be celebrated when the rubrics allow it—that is, when no feast interferes. The ordinary Mass appointed for feasts, however, may always be offered up with a special intention for the benefit of any one deceased, and, as far as the Sacrifice is concerned, it is of the same effect.

If you cannot have Mass said for your departed friends, you can, at least, join in offering for them the Mass at which you assist. You are not merely present at Mass as a spectator; you join with the priest in his offering.

At the *Orate fratres* the priest turns to the people with the words, "Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty," and you can have your own special intention in hearing Mass. When you receive the Blessed Sacrament at Mass you join in the Sacrifice in the most complete way. Our Lord then gives Himself to you, and, as it were, places at your disposal the merits of His most Precious Blood for your own salvation, and that you may offer it up for your brethren. How must the Holy Souls envy you the great privilege you enjoy! What would they give to be able to avail themselves of the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ as you can? Can you doubt that our Lord will hear you at that same time if you plead earnestly for the suffering souls, and that He will allow you to apply the treasure you have received towards the payment of their debts? To receive Communion devoutly for the souls of the faithful, and especially for those most dear to you, is, then, one of the great ways in which you should try to help them at this season.

There are a great many indulgences which may be applied for the souls in purgatory, and this is also one of the ways to avail ourselves of the merits of our Lord for their benefit. An indulgence is not the forgiveness of sin, but a remission of the punishment which remains due to sins already forgiven. The Church was established by Christ to carry out the work of redemption, and, as our Lord gave to men all the merits of His Passion to atone for their sins, so He left power with the Church to apply them in such a manner that the little prayers and acts of virtue which men perform may be available in payment of the great debt which they owe to God.

To many acts of devotion indulgences are attached, by which we may receive the remission of the punishment we have deserved, and this remission we may offer up for the souls of the faithful. They are not helped in the same way that we are. They are no longer the subjects of the Church on earth, and the power of binding and loosing which our Lord granted no longer applies to them. Indulgences can only help them by way of "suffrage"—that is, we can offer what we have ourselves gained, and beg of God, in His mercy, to apply it to them according as He may see fit. On the other hand, we very often fail to obtain for ourselves remission of punishment because the sins themselves are not forgiven. It may be that we are still attached to our sins, or, at least, have not renounced them thoroughly and in earnest; so that we are continually interposing an obstacle which prevents us from receiving the forgiveness God's mercy offers to us. With the Holy Souls, however, it is not so. They no longer have the least attachment to sin; their wills are now thoroughly purified, and unalterably fixed to do the will of God, so that they can never oppose the smallest obstacle to the designs of His mercy. We may, therefore, offer for them, with great confidence, the participation of the merits of our Lord, which is granted to us by the Church in His name.

The solemn commemoration of the souls of the faithful immediately follows the Feast of All Saints. The object of this seems plainly to be that all parts of the Church may be brought together, and, as it were, make common cause. This suggests to us that when we pray for the dead we should unite ourselves with the blessed in heaven, and get them to join with us in prayer. One of the distinguishing attributes of the saints, whilst on earth, was a tender devotion to the souls of the faithful; it is hard to find one whose life does not tell us that he was diligent in praying for the dead. The lively faith and burning charity of the saints, and the keen sense that they had of sin and

the punishment of sin, were always urging them on to pray for those who were suffering for sin. Will their zeal be less now than it was whilst they were on earth? Now they see God face to face, and can understand, a thousand times more clearly than we do, the immense misery of being separated from Him. They can understand that burning thirst "after the strong living God," which is the essential torment of purgatory.

How earnest, then, must be the prayers which they send up before the throne of God! "How long, Holy and True, how long?" The Church triumphant joins with us, then, in this holy work of intercession; Apostles and martyrs appeal to the throne of Christ, and ask grace for the sake of their labours and their blood; holy men and women entreat our Lord on behalf of their children and descendants, for those who were members of their flocks upon earth, or who have been devout to them; and, most of all, the Virgin Mother intercedes for all those who have been given to her as children by her Divine Son. She is the Mother of all Christian souls, and as such must feel for all in their necessities. How great, then, must be her care for the Holy Souls—the souls so dear to her Son, and yet suffering so terribly under the weight of his anger! May we not confidently ask her to aid us in the work of freeing them from their pain?

"They are the children of thy tears;
Then hasten, mother, to their aid;
In pity, think each hour appears
An age whilst glory is delayed."

—*Father Faber.*

But the Church triumphant, great and glorious as it is, cannot do all that we can. It is the will of God that all members of the Body of Christ should help, each in his own way. He has, therefore, put into our hands the Sacraments and Sacrifice which the blessed in heaven can no longer use; He has given us the power of satisfying for sin, which they no longer have. They enjoy the fruits of the Precious Blood in surpassing glory, as the source of all their blessedness; but we have it in our hands as an unfailing and unbounded storehouse of merit.

When you pray for the dead, then, think that you have a great work to do in union with the saints in heaven, and ask them to join their intentions with yours, so that you may be, in the highest sense, in their communion, as working with them to carry out the designs of God's mercy; beg of them to intercede for your particular objects of devotion, and help in heaven what you are doing on earth. We pray, indeed, for all the faithful, but we may well have special devotions of our own; not one in that holy suffering Church is excluded from our prayers, yet

there must be many whose case specially appeals to our feelings.

We may pray, for instance, with particular earnestness for those who are at the very gate of heaven, whose time of sorrow is nearly over. What a joy it would be to be able to pay that last farthing for which they are waiting, and open for them that blessed portal! Again, we may pray for those who are particularly friendless—who have none to pray for them; many there may be who are thus utterly abandoned and forgotten; perhaps they deserved it, because on earth they thought little of their brethren; but still God will hear our prayers for them, since it is His delight to show mercy. Others, again, had, perhaps, no time for preparation, or are suffering for the very faults to which we are most addicted, and for which we may one day have to suffer. Most of all, we are called upon to pray for our own people—parents, relations, friends, and benefactors, to whom God's Providence has given a special claim to our sympathy.

Listen to the words of St. Augustine about the death of his mother, St. Monica: "Lay, she says, this body anywhere; let not the care of it disturb you; this only I request of you, that you would remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you be. And when she had delivered this sentiment in what words she could, she was silent. . . . . And behold the corpse was carried away; we went and returned without tears. For neither in those prayers which we poured forth unto Thee, when the sacrifice of our price was offered for her, the corpse being placed by the grave's side, before being deposited therein, as the custom there is, not even in those prayers did I weep." "Inspire, my Lord, my God, inspire Thy servants, my brethren, Thy sons, my masters, whom with voice, and heart, and pen I serve, that as many as shall read these words may remember at Thy altar Monica, Thy servant, with Patricius, her sometime husband. May they, with pious affection, remember my parents in this transitory light, and my brethren, under Thee, our Father, in our Catholic Mother, and my fellow-citizens in the eternal Jerusalem, that so, what she made her last request to me, may be granted to her more abundantly through my confessions than through my prayers, in the prayers of many" (*Faith of Catholics*, vol. iii. pp. 187, 188). Such should be the feelings of all good Catholics for their departed parents, brothers, and sisters, intimate friends, and all who have a special claim on us. If we accustomed ourselves to think over all those who have a particular right to ask our help, and dwell on the circumstances which specially appeal to our feelings, there is no fear but that our prayers for the dead would be constant and earnest.

And now comes another consideration. What can the souls of the faithful do for us? A great deal, my dear brethren; we cannot help them without, at the same time, doing much for ourselves. How powerful is their example! We cannot enter in spirit into that prison of purgatory without learning lessons which it is hard to learn otherwise. The rich man in the Gospel said: "Then, father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments" (St. Luke xvi. 27). What must be the earnest desire of the holy souls to warn us of the punishment of sin, lest we, too, should come into that place of torments!

Our departed brethren know, perhaps, how recklessly, how foolishly, we are going on, day by day, laying up sorrow for ourselves; they see us, as it were, pouring in drop after drop of that bitter chalice, which one day we may have to drink, even to the very dregs. They full well know its insupportable bitterness, and they know, too, how easily we might avoid it by the mercy of God, and by the means which He has placed at our disposal. How gladly would they come to teach us these lessons, were such the will of God! But our Lord says: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them," and we have the very clear teaching of the Catholic Church, if we will only attend to it, and we have the example of our brethren, if we will only think of the lessons it sets before us.

Fancy, my dear brethren, if one of these Holy Souls could come from his prison, and preach to you about Purgatory; fancy such a one in my place!—one who has seen our Lord face to face in judgment—one who has seen how beautiful, and yet how terrible, He is—one who has had to pass every detail of his life, his every word, his secret thought, before the all-seeing eye of his Maker, and has heard the judgment of God on each one of them! How would such a one speak to you of the justice of God, and of the care of your salvation? What would he say of venial sin? What if he could but hear you speak of *small* sins—of offences which were matters of no consequence? He would tell you, my dear brethren, that these little things were the very bars of his prison, which kept him from his rest; that over these little things, so heedlessly done, he was now grieving night and day in his exile, and might, perhaps, have to go on grieving for years.

What, in particular, would he have to say about the neglects and irreverences which men commit in the service of God? With astonishment and indignation must the angels behold the way in which He is treated by mankind, but these, our brethren,

behold us with pity; they know only too well how great is the debt we are heaping up, which one day we shall be called on to pay. Each act of irreverence, every wilful neglect of the duty we owe to our Creator, we shall have in some way to atone for. Now we content ourselves with giving Him the least we can; we think we have done a great thing if we have got through matters of strict obligation with the least trouble possible; we pretend to give a Sunday's work to God, and call it the Lord's Day, and then give Him half-an-hour of our time, and, perhaps, *very* little of our thoughts. What would the Holy Souls tell us of our cleverness in all these matters?

Again, our departed friends might have something to tell us about excuses. The world is full of excuses; we have excuses for everything. We excuse ourselves from the service of God; we cannot hear Mass. Our health will not allow us to fast and abstain; we have no time for many prayers, and it is clear that our circumstances will allow us to give away very little to the poor, and very little to the Church. It is plain that our first duty is to our families, and that, in all things, we must observe the rules of prudence, moderation, and common sense. Excellent excuses! We believe in them thoroughly ourselves, and the world is full of them.

Yes, my dear brethren, but I am afraid Purgatory is full of them, too! The "fire which tries each man's work" will not forget to try all our good excuses, and I fear that many of them will turn out to be the "wood, hay, and stubble" of which the Apostle speaks. It is no use to make clever and ingenious excuses, which will convince our confessors, and, perhaps, almost convince ourselves, if thereby we are only contracting a debt which, in due season, we must pay to the last farthing. We cannot doubt that amongst the Holy Souls there is many a rich man who now sees how much more he ought to have done with his wealth, and weeps bitter tears over the way he spent it; he has now found out how much of his prudence was only avarice and self-indulgence. Many a poor man, too, is lamenting, because he made his poverty and hard work an excuse from serving God as he ought. He now sees that he could serve himself well enough, and that his good excuses only came in when it was a question of giving a little trouble to the performance of his religious duties. How sad it will be for rich and poor to see how easily they could have made the circumstances of their worldly position the means of escaping Purgatory, and the perverse ingenuity with which they have used them to heap up sorrow for themselves, and keep them out of their eternal rest! These, and many others, my dear

brethren, are the lessons we shall certainly learn from the Holy Souls if we think lovingly of them, and pray for them earnestly.

And now, my dear brethren, for a conclusion, let us place ourselves in spirit at the foot of God's altar, and fancy the whole Catholic Church assembled around. The Church on earth, in every land, joining in the great Sacrifice ; the angels and saints waiting to adore the Lamb in His humility on our altar, and, with their golden harps to supply for the poverty for our songs of praise : and the souls of the faithful looking up longingly for refreshment in their prison and speedy deliverance, which can come only from the Precious Blood of the Divine Victim. Our Lord is in the midst of us ; He is the Father of all, and the bond of union by which all parts of the Church are united together, and by whose merits alone we are able to assist each other.

SERMON XXXII.

Idleness.

"Why stand you here all the day idle."

On this day, my dear brethren, we begin the preparation for the solemn fast of Lent. For three Sundays the Church puts before us the considerations most likely to prepare us to make a good use of her great season of repentance and improvement. On this Sunday we are warned to put away that sloth which is the greatest enemy of spiritual progress. The Gospel tells us of the householder who went out to hire labourers into his vineyard; he goes forth at different hours of the day, and finds men standing about, doing nothing, and he sends them all into his vineyard to work. "Why stand you here all day idle?" is the reproach which he addresses to them, and our Lord means the words for a great many of us. We will, therefore, consider the sin of idleness, and especially idleness in spiritual things.

But, first, think what our Lord means by comparing the world to a vineyard, and the lessons which the comparison contains. We are, after all, only so many labourers, working for the same Master, and in the same vineyard, and with the same reward in view. We are very much struck, at first sight, by the different conditions of men; they are placed in all sorts of ranks and positions—some to command, others to obey. Some are lifted up high above their brethren, and seem to be the favourites of Providence. They have rank and power, and all the world can give, whilst others are doomed to poverty and toil. This, at first, seems hard; but if, after all, we can only remember that we are fellow-labourers with the greatest on earth, and are serving the same Master, we may easily learn to bear the inequalities that come in the course of the day's work.

There is one vineyard, but there must necessarily be many offices: there must be the ploughing, the digging, the draining and watering which the vintage requires, and there must also be the lighter kinds of labour, which are equally necessary, though they are not so toilsome. All the work, however, is equally honourable. It is not the best men who are always chosen for the easiest work, and it is not the easiest work which gets best paid when evening comes. This thought should be your comfort,

if you have to work hard; and should be your warning, if you are placed in an easy and quiet position of life. Each one is placed in his own particular corner of the vineyard by the unerring will of his Master, and there he must work and earn his day's wages; whatever may be the external surroundings or social distinctions between one man and another, they are really alike, and the best man will receive the greatest reward for his labour.

If rich people thought of this there would be no fear of their looking down on those who were their inferiors in worldly position; if the poor remembered it there would be little room for repining. This is the true equality which the Gospel teaches. The day is drawing to a close, and, when the evening comes, we shall, perhaps, be glad that we have not been standing all day in a quiet corner with very little work to do.

And now let us consider who are those who "stand all the day idle." There are many sorts of idleness. Some people are completely idle, and, as far as they can, do nothing at all; they rest themselves, or lounge about, or gossip all day long, and their great object seems to be to get as little into the day as possible. This easily becomes a habit, and both body and soul becomes so slothful that the very idea of labour of any kind is frightful to them. Those who give way to this vice are a trouble to themselves and to every one else, and life becomes a burden to them. They are always tired—tired of doing nothing, and still more tired if any exertion is absolutely necessary, and are only anxious to "kill time," and make their day as short as possible.

"Why stand you all the day idle?"—is there nothing to do in your Lord's vineyard?—has God given you so many powers of body and mind to no purpose?—does He mean your days to pass by in this way, with nothing to show for them? These words may well be a reproach to many of us. We are all, by nature, inclined to sloth, and, if we are not on our guard, we easily allow the torpor of sloth to creep over us.

But there are a great many people who are not idle in this sense; on the contrary, they are always busy, and yet they do nothing. The Holy Scripture says: "Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly" (Eccles. ix. 10). Now, doing a thing earnestly means giving your powers of mind and body to the work, and, moreover, giving the time, the patience, the perseverance, and punctuality necessary for success. It is not uncommon to find busy people who undertake a number of different things, and yet never have anything to show, because they want these qualities of perseverance and steadiness: they begin one thing to-day, and another to-morrow; and as soon as

they have well begun, they are tired of them, and turn to something else. Such people, for example, will undertake some work for the poor—and are very full of it for a day or two, and take a great deal of trouble. At the end of that time they would prefer some work for the Church—so they desert the work they have begun for a new one; next they think, it may be, that they ought to do something for their own improvement, and again give up what they have undertaken—in short, they are like butterflies, going from flower to flower, but making no stay anywhere.

This is not doing work earnestly, and, in its results, is little better than actual idleness. We have to consider, then, not only whether we work at all, but whether we are working in such a way that what we do may produce some good results. If we do not take pains to give our work the necessary qualities for success we shall deserve our Lord's reproach, "Why stand you here all the day idle?" almost as much as if we did actually nothing.

But there is another kind of labour which is very like idleness, and that is the labour bestowed on things which are not worth it. There are many who labour very hard, and with great perseverance, and every quality to ensure success—but, then, they have never thought whether the objects they were pursuing were worth having. For instance, you will find many who devote themselves to their own little pleasures and trifling pursuits—to their hobbies, as people call them—and spare no trouble about them. They will make collections of books or pictures, or cultivate flowers; or they aim at excelling in this or that accomplishment. Or, again, it may be that they aim at some little social success or distinction, and are indefatigable in working for it; but, for all that, they are idle, because what they are working for is not worth attaining.

To escape the charge of idleness, then, it is not enough to be doing something; we must, also, be doing it earnestly—and we must be doing it for some adequate end. If you are not working in this way, our Lord's words, "Why stand you here all the day idle?" apply to you.

But, now, let us ask: What is the great evil of idleness?—why should we not be idle?—why may not a man spend the whole of his life in pleasing himself—in doing just as much work as he finds it necessary or convenient to do, and no more? The answer is a very simple one, though there are many people who forget it: it is, that we "are not our own," but are the servants of a Master who has placed us in this world expressly in order that we may work. Yes, my dear brethren, we can none of us

say, as the men in the market-place did, "No man hath hired us." Long ago has the Lord sent us all into His vineyard, and set us to work of some kind or other; long ago has He put before us the exceeding great reward prepared for those who do their work faithfully. The world sets us the example of toil; we shall be without excuse if we are idle in the midst of so many who are labouring, "they, indeed, that they may receive a corruptible crown, and we an incorruptible one" (I. Cor. ix. 25).

Our Lord does not intend any one to be idle. He has not sent some into the world to work hard all the days of their life, aud others to spend their time in their own gratification, like the rich man in the Gospel, "clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasting sumptuously every day." People do so sometimes, it is true, but this is simply an abuse, and a neglect of the very end for which God sent them into the world.

Let us, then, lay down this principle: there is some work for every one of us, if he will only take the trouble to look for it, and his eternity depends, in a great measure, on his finding it out and doing it conscientiously. It is generally plain enough what we have to do; we are already placed in our own particular corner of the vineyard, and we see exactly what is the work required of us. This is the case with the great multitude of men, and it is a great blessing that it is so. We ought to thank God for having made our work so obvious, that we cannot make mistakes or deceive ourselves as to what we have to do. The work of gaining a livelihood, or of taking care of a family, or the obligations of a particular calling in life—all these are simple enough. You may do it well, or may neglect it, but the work is there before you.

There are many, however, to whom it is not quite so easy to find out the work that God asks of them, and, therefore, they cannot see quite so readily why they may not lead idle and self-indulgent lives. They need not work for a living, they have plenty of money, and they are their own masters. All this may be true, and yet there is work for them if they will only do it. God has not sent any one here simply as a supernumerary, and work will never be wanting to those who are anxious to do their Master's will.

Sometimes the work of those who seem to have nothing to do is most important, and much more may depend on one in such a position than on a hundred who are engaged in actual toil. The importance and responsibility of the work to be done does not correspond with the labour involved, and so many a man has been placed by God in positions of the greatest importance for good or evil, and yet never even found out that he had any duty

in life, simply because he had not to labour with his hands. It will be a terrible misfortune for some of those who have gone through life fancying that they had nothing to do but please themselves, if one day they find out that God expected a great deal of them, and that their idleness and neglect have had fatal results.

It is true, no doubt, that there are a great many who have nothing to do—that is, there is no necessary work found for them. They are, it may be, quite independent, with no anxiety for their own maintenance or comforts, and they have no one dependent on their care, and no one has a right to their time and attention. A good many of you, my dear brethren, I dare say, may be in this condition—people of independent means, or young ladies living with their parents, and so forth ; they may be able to say, quite truly, that no one has any great claim on them, and that they have most of their time to themselves. It does not, however, follow that God means them to be idle, or that they may make their own amusement the business of their lives. If God's Providence has given them no fixed work to do, let them find work for themselves. There are, indeed, many kinds of work which are impossible to those who are in the full current of human life, and hampered by all its ordinary duties, and these seem to be expressly reserved by Providence for those who, for a time or for their whole lives, are left on one side, as it were, by the eddies of the stream.

Such people often excuse themselves ; they can find nothing to do. They are like the lawyer in the Gospel, who, " willing to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbour " (St. Luke x. 29)? There is always, in reality, plenty to be done ; we have only to look at the list of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and try to practise them, and we shall have enough to do. In England, particularly, there is a great want of people able and willing to give a little time and trouble to the instruction of the poor and ignorant, to the encouragement of those who are faint-hearted and exposed to temptation; to instructing converts, and bringing back bad Catholics, and many works which the clergy cannot possibly accomplish. In every congregation there is great need of such workers, and yet there are few to be found—not for want of people who have leisure time, but rather because those who have time on their hands do not realize the duty of doing work of some kind.

The day will come when a good many such people will be much troubled to answer when the Master asks them why they passed their lives " standing all the day idle."

But nothing gives us a better idea of the necessity of work

than our Lord's parable of the talents. It is one which we all know very well, and which the Church is never tired of repeating to us. Our Lord describes to us "a man going into a far country, who called his servants and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to every one according to his ability, and immediately he took his journey" (St. Matt. xxv. 14). We see at once what these talents mean, and we know that God has entrusted to each his share. When it is a question of glorifying ourselves, we are ready enough to admit that we have received the five talents: we see very easily that there are plenty of people who have fewer gifts and less capacity than we have, and are more than sufficiently disposed to look down upon them in consequence. Unfortunately, we stop there, and do not think much of the sequel of the parable, to consider whether we have ready the other five talents, or the other two talents, as the case may be, which we should have made over and above.

Listen, my dear brethren, to the judgment passed on the idle servant; hear his excuses, and think what you will have to say for yourselves when you stand in his place: "But he that had received the one talent came and said: 'Lord, I know that thou art a hard man: thou reapest where thou hast not sown, and gatherest where thou hast not strewed, and, being afraid, I went and hid thy talent in the earth. Behold, here, thou hast that which is thine.' And his Lord answering, said to him: 'Wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sow not, and gather where I have not strewed; thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take ye therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents . . . . and the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (St. Matt. xxv. 24).

It was no excuse that he had done no harm with the sum of money entrusted to him; it was no excuse that he hadn't known exactly in what manner to employ the money; it was his business to find out how to use the talents left in his hands, and he was bound to have something to show for them.

We are bound to work, then, my dear brethren, because long ago our Master has said to each one of us: "Go you into My vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just," and also because the endowments and qualifications of body and mind, of which we are conscious, are a standing protest against idleness. There is, however, another, and a very strong reason, which should work. "The night cometh when no can work" (St. John ix. 4).

It is the wonderful privilege and peculiarity of our position in this life that we can work. The blessed in heaven serve God day and night, crying out, "Holy, holy, holy," without ceasing, but they cannot work—in like manner, those who are lost in hell cannot work, and the souls of the faithful in purgatory cannot work; they may do the Will of God and suffer patiently, but all that they can do is of no effect. To us alone is it said, "I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain" (St. John xv. 16).

Is it not a wonderful privilege that everything we choose now to do will be counted for our advantage for ever?—that every little labour we may now undertake for Almighty God will have a value for all eternity? If one day were given to you, my dear brethren, on which you might make a fortune, if you liked, and you knew that every minute of the day might be turned into money, and that you would never have another chance, I do not think you would spend many hours of that day in idleness. So it would be with us during our mortal lives, if only we thought as we should, of the dark night which is coming, when no man can work: what is then finished will be ours—what is only commenced will be left imperfect, and all the things we meant to do will be but visions to tantalize us for ever.

I must now say a few words about the particular kind of idleness that concerns us the most—I mean spiritual sloth. There are a great many who, in one sense, cannot be called idle—they are diligent and active enough in all worldly affairs—and yet they most truly deserve the reproach for "standing all the day idle." So long as it is a question of making money, or getting on in the world, or seeking after their own pleasures, they spare no pains; but in the service of God they are slothful and indifferent. They understand that they cannot make a fortune, or even gain a livelihood for themselves and their families, without hard work, but they expect to gain eternal salvation without any trouble. They are slothful in prayer, slothful in attending the church and in receiving the Sacraments, and seem to consider it a hardship if any exertion is asked of them for God's service.

Will not the very labour and diligence of your lives bear witness against you some day, my dear brethren, if you serve God slothfully? "Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant"—from your own actions I judge you, O slothful Christian! You could be very diligent when your own temporal interests were at stake, but in everything that concerned your Creator you were idle; you could rise early, and go

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long distances to work for your bread, and thought nothing of toiling from morning till night, but you couldn't get up to hear Mass, and thought half-an-hour spent in the service of God a great burden. When you sought your own pleasure you never grudged trouble; you were ingenious in finding out how to amuse yourself, and persevering enough in overcoming difficulties; but the least thing stopped you when it was your duty to come to Mass, or to receive the Sacraments. There are but too many of us who deserve these reproaches. Men use weights and measures in the service of God which they would not think of employing in worldly concerns; they offer to Almighty God a slothful, careless service which they would never offer to an earthly master.

Almighty God reproached the Jews for such negligent service in these words: "If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil?—and if you offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it to thy Prince, if he will be pleased with it, or if he will regard thy face, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. i. 8). Let us compare the diligence which we bring to the service of God with that which we display in our earthly affairs, and make sure that we do not deserve the same kind of condemnation.

Spiritual sloth is the great bane of religion. It creeps over our souls like a leprosy, and numbs all their powers; it makes all the spiritual gifts of God unavailing. God's grace is not meant for sluggards, and if we will do nothing for ourselves, God will leave us, and do nothing for us. If people are too idle to pray as they ought, they have no right to expect the gifts which God gives to prayer; if they are too idle to make use of the Sacraments, they must not expect that God will give them miraculously the grace the Sacraments were intended to bestow.

The special time of grace—the season of Lent—is at hand, and if we would make it a season of blessing we must first try hard to shake off the vice of spiritual sloth, and think that the words of to-day's Gospel are addressed to us: "Why stand you here all the day idle?" We must understand that God has given us a work to do in this world for soul as well as for body, and that this work requires the same kind of energy, thought, and perseverance which is necessary for success in worldly affairs.

The Gospel gives a number of other important lessons on which I will briefly touch before concluding. "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil because I am good?" These are the words the Master addressed to those who envied

their neighbours. God is supreme master of His own gifts, and gives to each one according to His own good pleasure, "dividing to every one as He will" (I. Cor. xii. 11).

Whatever He gives us we may be sure it is more than we deserve; and if we fancy that others are better off it is our plain duty to submit to His good pleasure, and not to murmur, as the men in the Gospel murmured. We know too little about the secret history of our neighbours to be able to make a fair comparison; it often happens that those whom we envy have troubles to bear, of which we have no conception; but if they are better off than ourselves we have no right to complain. "Is thy eye evil because I am good?" The vice of repining at the good fortune of others is abominable before God in all things, but especially in spiritual blessings, so that "envy of another's spiritual good" is counted amongst the sins against the Holy Ghost. It is our duty to rejoice and be glad over every soul that loves God, even when we see that they are superior to ourselves.

"These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the heat." "I will also give to this last even as to thee." In these words we have a most solemn warning not to trust too much to our own work. We may have "borne the burden of the day and the heat," and yet, at the end, it will be seen that we have done very little, and that we must trust not to our work, but to the generosity of our Master for our reward. "Go you, also, when you have done all things that are commanded to you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which we ought to do" (St. Luke xvii. 10).

The men who had worked for one hour were made equal to those who had worked during the whole summer's day. What comfort our Lord gives by these words to those who are conscious of much idleness and neglect in past times! Even at the eleventh hour, if we enter into the Lord's vineyard, and set ourselves in earnest to do His work, we can make up for all the past, and, by His grace, "redeem the time." He will not reckon only what we have actually done, but will take into account the zeal and good-will we have displayed, and, above all, His own infinite generosity.

The lesson of the day's Gospel may be summed up in this: We are to labour for our salvation; we are to labour with all our strength, in whatever part of the Lord's vineyard we may be placed, since one Master is Lord of all; we are to listen at once, if we have not done so hitherto, to His command, "Go

you, also, into my vineyard," since the evening is at hand, and the "night cometh when no man can work;" and, above all, we are not to pride ourselves upon what we have done, since "it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16).

SERMON XXXIII.

The Commandments.

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments."—St. Matt. xix. 17.

THIS, my dear brethren, is the answer our Lord gave to a young man who came to Him and said, "Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" We have to ask our Lord the same question. Our one business here is to save our souls, and we should keep on asking every day, What must I do to save my soul? What does God require of me that I may get to heaven? How can I secure eternal life? To all of these questions our Lord will answer you, as He did the young man, "Keep the Commandments." "Thou hast commanded that Thy Commandments be kept most diligently," the Psalmist tells us, and nothing will supply the place of this diligence.

We were created for this one object—to save our souls, and to do so by serving and obeying Almighty God. "Man was created," to use the words of St. Ignatius, "for this end, that he might praise and reverence the Lord his God, and, by serving Him, might, at last, be saved." This service consists in keeping His Commandments.

The very first idea of all religion, both natural and revealed, is that of responsibility. If we were not responsible to Almighty God for our actions, there would be no religion at all, and any doctrine which aims at taking away our sense of responsibility to God is injurious to religion.

"He made us, and not we ourselves," and "He made all things for Himself," so that we are on earth for nothing else but to do His will, and to be responsible to Him.

The very first solemn warning given to men after the fall was about this responsibility—that is to say, that every man had to answer for himself to Almighty God. The Lord said to Cain, "Why art thou angry, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? but if ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at the door?"—and almost the last words of the Holy Scripture are to the same effect: "Behold I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works" (Apoc. xxii. 12). The same thing is

taught by our Lord in every possible shape. He tells us to produce fruit.

"Every tree that bringeth forth not good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire;" and He tells us that nothing *else* will do. Many people, He says, will put forward the spiritual privileges they have enjoyed; but no spiritual privileges will avail unless they have been followed up by keeping the Commandments. "Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and cast out devils in Thy name, and done many miracles in Thy name? And then I will profess unto them: I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity" (St. Matt. vii. 22).

It seems hardly worth while, my brethren, talking to a Catholic congregation about the necessity of "doing good works," that is to say, of keeping God's Commandments; but, in fact, it is very useful to do so. We all of us find words and professions a good deal easier than deeds; and, besides, there are some very erroneous theories to be found amongst our neighbours on this subject. A great many good people still profess to hold the belief that "good works" are not necessary for salvation. If you wish to be saved, they say, all you have to do is to believe—"Believe, and you are saved." This idea was one of the chief errors introduced at the time of the Reformation. In order to magnify the importance of faith, the Reformers taught that it was, by itself, quite sufficient, and they declared that no good work of any kind was necessary for the salvation of those who believed.

The real effect of such a doctrine was not to magnify faith, but to put an end to all responsibility, and, if it had been possible to carry out the principle in practice, it would have destroyed every sort of religion. What, let us ask, is faith itself? Is it *always* pleasing to God? "The devils believe, and tremble," St. James tells us; but are they any the better for their belief? On the contrary—the clearness of the knowledge they have of God gives its bitterness to their rebellion. They have an intensity of hatred against God, which no man could have, from their wondrous and exact understanding of good and evil. So it is with men. If you have a very exact and clear knowledge of God, and continue to disobey Him, your sin is made all the greater by your knowledge. If your faith is very keen and very lively, so as to bring home to you the greatness and majesty of God, almost as if you saw Him face to face—and yet, in spite of that, you choose to keep on insulting and defying Him—does not your very faith make you more inexcusable? Imagine the position of a well-instructed Catholic

who, from childhood, has been taught to realize by faith all the details of our Lord's Passion, and has, again and again, in spirit stood at the foot of the cross. If such a one persists in a course of life by which he knows that he is trampling under foot the Precious Blood, how will his faith help him? It is very plain that this very faith, which should have been so valuable, can only have the effect of aggravating his crime.

The Jews in the Old Law were guilty of more terrible crimes than any other people *could* commit, for the very reason that they had so much more knowledge and so much more faith. In the same way our faith may become, not an advantage, but an aggravation of crime, if we do not join to it obedience to God's law. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments."

The same applies to the other theological virtues. What is hope without obedience? Is it a virtue at all? "I will gain heaven—I hope to be saved—but *without* doing the will of Him who is the Lord and Master of Heaven!" Is not this pretty much what a man says when he goes on hoping without really trying to do what is right. Is not such a hope as this very like a *contempt* of God? Will it be accepted as a virtue before God's judgment-seat? Let us see the sort of answer he is likely to receive. Our Lord Himself gave it to us—"Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked man. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up what I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow" (St. Luke xix. 22). The careless presumption contained in hope of this kind is, in fact, a very great aggravation to disobedience.

Again, let me ask you—Is it possible to have a real love of God without obedience? Again, the answer comes very plain from our Lord's own words, "If you love Me, keep My Commandments" (St. John xiv. 15); "He that hath My Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (St. John xiv. 21); and St. John, our Lord's beloved Disciple, says: "For this is the charity of God that we keep His Commandments" (I. St John v. 3). It is clear, therefore, that there can be no real love of God without a good will to keep His Commandments. You often find people who are living in the breach of these Commandments, and yet *fancy* that they love God. A love like this, however, is a delusion. It means that they love God, but they love themselves and their own way a good deal more. Such a love is a mere fancy or sentiment, and as far as possible from being that real charity, the queen of virtues, which cannot be had except by those who, at least, are *trying* to do God's will.

People sometimes think to make up for sins to which they have attached themselves by good works of one sort or another.

You will find a man living in some sin or neglecting some necessary duty. His conscience reproaches him, and, as he cannot bring himself to do what he knows the law of God requires of him, he sets to work to do something to make up for his disobedience. He gives away a great deal to the poor or to the Church—he says a great many prayers, and so forth. After all his trouble, he is only deluding himself. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments," is the inexorable law for us all—and all the "good works" in the world will not make up for his persistence in any one serious sin against God's Commandments.

"If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing"—(I. Cor. xiii. 3); and this charity is the observance of God's Commandments. Everything else that you can offer to God is in vain if, with it, you do not also offer the sacrifice of your obedience. "Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed? for obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams" (I. Kings xv. 22).

We must consider exactly what it is that we mean by the Commandments. By commandment we mean the will and law of God, by whatever channel it is made known to men. God's will is declared to us in several different ways. The first and most ancient of all laws is the law of nature, by which God speaks to the hearts of men. To this is added the special Commandments which God has directly revealed; and these are carried out in detail by the law of the Church—that is, by laws not coming *directly* from God, but given in His name and by His authority.

I said the law of nature is the first of all laws. St. Paul says, "When the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law, these having not the law are a law to themselves; who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts between themselves accusing or also defending one another" (Rom. ii. 14). This, my dear brethren, is just what goes on in all our hearts. God has not left Himself without a witness within our souls. Every man has a distinct notion of *duty*, of what he *ought* to do and ought *not* to do, which plainly tells him of a superior law that he is bound to obey. He *can* go against this law, but he instinctively knows that he is doing wrong in so acting. The voice of this law is what we call conscience. Conscience is the directing power which God has given to men to tell them what to do. It doesn't go into general

questions of right and wrong, or concern itself about other people, but simply tells *us* what we must do or must *not* do in particular circumstances, and warns us when we have done wrong.

The first of all duties is to obey the commands of our conscience. You cannot ever go against the dictates of your conscience without committing a sin. Even supposing your conscience is mistaken in a particular case, still you are bound to follow it *so long as it is your conscience.* Your conscience is the guide God has given you, and you are responsible to Him for attending to it, because it is like God's own voice speaking in your soul. Besides this, it is your duty not to blunt or dull your conscience in any way. Many people succeed in taking off the edge of their own conscience, if I may say so, in such a manner as to make it nearly useless. Sometimes this is done by over-persuasion and using all sorts of arguments to deceive it. You can persuade your conscience to a good deal, if you try. Sometimes conscience is dulled by simple neglect. If you go on, day after day, doing what conscience warns you is wrong, of course, after a time, it ceases to warn you at all. What is the consequence? *Not* that evil ceases to be evil, but that people go on adding sin to sin, and heaping up judgment to themselves, whilst they scarcely perceive what they are doing. It very often happens that conscience is dulled in some points, though keen enough in others. You will find people who are most conscientious and particular about one class of duties, and at the same time utterly careless about another class. For example, a man will be particularly conscientious about all the duties connected with his neighbours, and yet go on neglecting his duty to Almighty God in a scandalous manner; or it is sometimes the other way. He may be very good about his prayers, and think very little of cheating his neighbour in his money dealings, or, perhaps, is vindictive and quarrelsome in social life. You may say such people have only *half* a conscience, or that one half of it is asleep and the other half awake.

A man, then, has several duties with regard to his conscience. He must obey it, but he must also take care that it is kept in working order, and that not about one or two things, but about all his duties. Your conscience is your guide, but it has to be put right itself sometimes. It is not a kind of infallible instinct, but a judgment formed by reason and authority, and has to be kept right by comparing it constantly with the law of God as given in other ways.

I will give you an illustration of this, which will explain what I mean. Conscience is like the compass sailors have to steer their ships by. If they did not attend to the compass they

would certainly be lost: but attending to it is not sufficient. They must also take care that the compass hasn't got wrong in some way or other. Some attraction on board ship may easily have turned it a little or a great deal out of its right direction; so they must constantly compare their compass with the stars, or with landmarks of some kind. If they do not trouble to do this, the compass they are following so diligently may be all the while leading them upon the rocks.

In addition to the natural law which God has put into the heart of every one, God has given to us all a revealed law. This was given because the natural law is not exact and definite enough by itself. It is not clear enough to be applied on all occasions. It tells us, certainly, a number of general principles, but it is sometimes difficult to find out how these are to be applied to the purposes of daily life. Passions and interests are continually interfering—just like the bar of iron attracting the compass—and obscure our views of the natural law, so as to make conscience direct us falsely. The positive law of God—the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, as we call it—was given to men to strengthen the natural law—to make its precepts more plain and harder to put aside. God gave them, as you know, on Mount Sinai, with great power and majesty. The Lord commanded that a limit should be drawn round the mountain, and that no one should pass this limit on pain of death, and then He descended on the top of the mountain in fire and thunder, and gave the law, commencing with those solemn words: "I am the Lord thy God."

These Commandments, however, were given to the Jews, and we know that they formed a part of a very long and minute set of rules and commands, which we call the Old Law, or Covenant of God with the children of Israel. The question, then, is, How far are these Commandments binding, now that the Old Law has come to an end, and is no longer in force? It is plain the Commandments given to the Jews were, *in part*, an explanation of the natural law, and, as such, must ever be binding upon all men (because the natural law can never change); but *also*, in part, were particular positive precepts which were given to the Jews, and meant for them only. For instance, when God says to man: "Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me," it is merely a re-announcement of the natural laws that man must worship his Creator, and no other; but when He commands them to sanctify certain days, and keep them holy with certain sacrifices and other rites, He is giving a law to the Jews which may or may not be continued to others, when the Jewish Covenant is at an end.

But how are we to know which Commandments are permanently binding and which have passed away? Moreover, how are we to find out the meaning of the Commandments—that is, how they are to be understood in particular circumstances? If we have not some way of seeing how the Commandments are to be applied to ourselves, they cannot be a guide to our lives.

This points to the obvious necessity of some living authority on earth to explain the law of God. A revealed command implies the establishment of some divinely-established tribunal to say what the Commandment means.

Every human law that ever was has required some constituted authority to explain it to the people, and tell them how they must observe it. In England we have a number of Courts and judges, whose business it is to explain the laws and see that they are observed. If it were not so, there would very soon cease to be any law at all. It is exactly the same with the law of God. The Catholic Church is the Court appointed by Him to explain the meaning of His laws to men. It has two different duties with regard to the Commandments. It must first tell us what God's law is, and what it means wherever there is a difficulty, and then it must make such additional laws as may be required for carrying into effect the general principles laid down in the divine law. In the Old Law, as I said just now, there were great principles, and temporary directions to the Jews to show them how these great principles should be put in practice. So it is now, except that the temporary directions are left to the Church to be made, altered, and adapted to different countries, as occasion may require.

In the Commandments, then, there are two parts to be spoken of—the great principles of right and wrong, and positive divine precept, as they are explained by the Catholic Church, (which are chiefly contained in the Ten Commandments); and, secondly, the ecclesiastical law—that is, the laws made by the Catholic Church to carry out these principles in detail. These last are commonly called the "Laws of the Church."

The divine law is about principles which never admit of alteration. They are eternal truths, and bind at all times and in all places, and no one can ever exempt you from the obligation to observe them. No matter what difficulties they may involve, they always bind, and it is always a crime not to observe them. Ecclesiastical laws, on the contrary, are about things which are not essential in themselves, but are enforced as matters of discipline at particular times and in particular countries. It is clear that regulations of this sort readily admit of dispensa-

tion. The authority that imposed them may think it expedient to relax them either altogether or in particular cases, or it may be impossible to observe them, or so difficult as to be *morally* impossible. In such cases these laws cease to bind. It is not that they ever may be violated without sin, but that, under certain circumstances, they do not bind.

To take an example: The divine law—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart"—*always* binds, and no possible circumstances could dispense any one from its obligation. On the other hand, the Church's law—"To hear Mass on all Sundays and holidays"—at once ceases to bind if you are a hundred miles from a church, or are confined to bed by serious illness.

The Commandments generally have a positive and a negative side—that is, they tell you some duty that you must perform, and some sin that you must avoid. "We must avoid evil and do good." Each Commandment tells us that we must avoid some sin, and thereby means to tells us that we must practise some virtue; or else it commands us to do some duty, and by this command implies that we have to abstain from all the things incompatible with the duty commanded. It is necessary, therefore, not merely to consider what is told us by each Commandment in so many words, but also to find out what are the obligations that come from the express command.

I have now, my dear brethren, given a general account of the Commandments; and I shall next time begin to treat of each of them in particular, and so get out of general remarks, and speak in detail of the duties and obligations of common life.

What I have said amounts to this. Faith is of no avail without good works. "Faith without works is dead in itself," St. James tells us. By "good works" we must not understand certain pious duties, such as saying prayers, giving alms to the poor, and so forth, as people sometimes do. These words have a more general signification, and mean keeping God's Commandments. If we keep God's Commandments carefully, then our lives are full of good works.

These Commandments make one great law, which was originally given to us by God in our very nature, and was confirmed and published by Him solemnly on Mount Sinai. In the New Testament our Lord confirmed this law in the most striking manner. He did not do this systematically—that is, He never precisely tells us which part of the Old Law is to be retained and continued in the Christian dispensation, and which part has come to an end, and is no longer binding. The circumstances

of the time and the state of the Jewish people rendered this impossible. He, therefore, left His Church upon earth as the one guide and teacher from whom all men were to learn His law. "He who heareth you heareth Me," was the commission He gave to His Apostles. They were to explain to men what His law was, and had full authority from Him to make all those regulations necessary for carrying out in practice all the general principles He had taught them.

And now, my dear brethren, as you know, the observance of this law is essential. God is no respecter of persons. Whoever you are, whatever your position in life, whatever good you may have done to others in your time, still you cannot be saved unless you diligently keep God's law. "If you will enter into life, keep the Commandments." Our Lord has told us expressly that in this He is a hard Master. "He that doth the will of My Father in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

But our Lord is not really a hard Master. "Take up My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your soul, for My yoke is sweet and My burden is light" (St. Matt. xi. 29).

It is not, as the world would tell you, a heavy and painful burden depriving this life of all its brightness and joy; on the contrary, with His help it may be borne, so as "to give rest to your souls"—the best rest which men can have in this life—the peace which this world cannot give.

His yoke should be sweet to us, because He bore it Himself first, to set us the example. He became in His human nature a "debtor to the whole law," that He might encourage us to take it up after Him.

The hardness of the law comes not from Him, but from the rebellious and obstinate spirit in which people take it up. They are ungenerous, and wish to do as little as possible; they are discontented, and murmur at every sacrifice asked of them. Is it very wonderful that they should find it heavy? "The justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts; the commandment of the Lord is lightsome. The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves: more to be desired than gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. For thy servant keepeth them, and in keeping them there is a great reward" (Ps. xviii. 9). Such is the language of one who strove hard to keep God's Commandments. In keeping them there is a great reward even in this life, and the reward of eternal life hereafter.

It ought to be our pride and joy, then, as it certainly is our

first business in this life, to know the law of the Lord, to meditate on it, to love it, and to keep it most diligently. "Oh, how have I loved Thy law, O Lord! It is my meditation all the day. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Thy words. How sweet are Thy words to my palate, more than honey to my mouth" (Ps. cxviii. 97).

SERMON XXXIV.

The Worship of God.

"The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve" (St. Matt. iv. 10).

I AM going to speak to-day, my dear brethren, about the First Commandment. It is, as you know, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them."

The commands here are all negative; they are, "thou shalt *not* make any graven thing," "thou shalt *not* adore them or serve them." It is clear that there must also be a positive part, and, moreover, that the positive part is the most important. We are *not* to serve false gods, that we may be able to serve the true God. It would be to very little purpose, if a man were merely to abstain from worshipping idols, if, at the same time, he refused to serve the true God. The positive part of the Commandment, which is implied in the words "thou shalt not have strange gods before Me," is "the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve."

This Commandment is one of immense importance, and directs a large part of every Christian's life; and yet, oddly enough, it is one which people very seldom think about. For example, you very often see people who consider they commit no sins. They cannot discover anything the matter with their lives, and are indignant if you suggest they may find a few sins to confess. They are almost ready to say, "All these things have I kept from my youth," as the young man did in the Gospel; and yet all the while, perhaps, their lives have been passed in the habitual breach of the First Commandment—that is, they had never really and truly "adored" and "served" the Lord their God.

The First Commandment embraces all the things which belong to the service of God. Everything commanded for God's worship, whether generally by the law of nature, or by positive laws explained and laid down for us by the Church, comes under it. For example, if you neglect God, and do not think of Him

as you ought, and do not give Him the service He requires, or if you fail to give Him your heart, or if you despise the ordinances made for worshipping Him, you are breaking the First Commandment. You may be breaking other Commandments as well. For instance, if you neglect Mass on Sunday you are breaking a precept of the Church certainly, but who can say that you are not also sinning against the worship due to God, and so breaking the First Commandment? By it we are commanded to be religious, and to give proper time and diligence to God's service. If, in fact, you are not religious, and pay very little attention to God's service, you are habitually disregarding this precept.

It is not enough to keep all the other Commandments if you neglect the first and greatest of the Commandments. How can a man expect to save his soul by so doing? People sometimes say: "I have always been just to others, and kind to my neighbour, and I cannot but think that God will reward me." It is certainly true if all these duties to others were done in such a way as to make up, in some sense, a service to God; but if they were in *no* sense a worship to God, why should He reward you for them?

The natural law points out to men the necessity of serving God, even without any special command. "He made us, and not we ourselves," and it is quite evident that He made us for His own service—and therefore that the very end of our existence is to worship Him and give Him honour. If we fail in doing the one special thing for which we were made, of what good are we? A machine of any kind that won't do the work for which it is meant is a bad one. It may be very pretty to look at, but its master will be very glad to get rid of it as soon as he finds that it will not work. So with ourselves. We may be admired by men and praised by our neighbours, but if we do not carry out the object for which we are made we certainly shall not please our Maker. Our Blessed Saviour tells us this in a very plain and forcible way, in the parable of the barren fig-tree. The master of the vineyard comes to the fig-tree and says: "Behold, for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down, therefore—why cumbereth it the ground?" (St. Luke xiii. 7).

We, my dear brethren, have been planted in the Lord's vineyard, not three years, but a great many years—perhaps ten times three years—and what fruit have we produced? What have we done for our Master's service?

Now, what are we to do to serve God? The first thing is to acknowledge Him. "We praise Thee, O God! we acknowledge

Thee to be our Lord." If we do not acknowledge God to be our Lord, and this with our hearts as well as our understandings, we cannot possibly serve Him as we ought. We must acknowledge Him to be our Creator, and irresponsible Lord, and absolute Master. With earthly Lords and masters we have our rights, by which they are controlled; but it is not so with Him. Before Him we have no rights, except just what it pleases Him to give us. "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? or hath not the potter power over the clay?" (Rom. ix. 20.) "All nations are before Him as though they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity" (Isais xl. 10). "For who shall say to Thee: What hast Thou done? or who shall withstand Thy judgment? or who shall come before Thee to be a revenger of wicked men? or who shall accuse Thee if the nations perish which Thou hast made? (Wisd. xii. 12).

These words of the Holy Scriptures give us some idea of the supremacy and infinite dominion of the Almighty God over His creatures. We must begin our service to Him by acknowledging this dominion with our whole heart, by confessing it, and glorying in it. When we have made this acknowledgment of our submission and servitude there comes the duty of *adoring* the Divine Majesty to which we have submitted ourselves.

How little we see of this amongst men? How little is there which looks like real, heartfelt *adoration?*

If we go up into heaven with St. John, we find it there—"and they rested not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is, and is to come. And when those living creatures gave glory and honour and benediction to Him that sitteth on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty ancients fell down before Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne saying: Thou art worthy O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power, because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were and have been created" (Apoc. iv. 8); or again on earth at Bethlehem, with the Magi: "And, entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His Mother; and falling down they adored Him, and, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh" (St. Matt. ii. 11).

These examples show us what is meant by adoration. It means the practical confession and acknowledgment that we are but dust and ashes in the presence of our Creator.

Our prayers do not take this tone as often as they might do.

"Saying prayers," with many people, means reciting certain formulas in rather a "cut-and-dried" way which looks as unlike as possible to the mental position of the angels round God's throne in heaven. You ought, then, to throw a good deal more of the spirit of adoration into your prayers. If you do not, you are wanting in the very first element of *real* worship to God. Let us adopt to ourselves the words of the Psalmist: "Come let us adore, and fall down and weep before the Lord that made us; for He is the Lord our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand" (Ps. xciv. 6).

Next to this humble acknowledgment, which is the root of all worship, comes the *praise* of God. The great work of all God's creatures is to praise Him. The whole creation—animate and inanimate, rational or irrational—owes to God a debt of praise. All creatures are formed for the glory of God, and what ought they to do but praise Him? "The heavens and earth are full of Thy glory." Listen to the words of the Church: "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee. We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty."

This praise is to to be addressed to God first of all for Himself—"for Thy great glory"—as a tribute called forth by His infinite majesty, by His infinite perfections, and the impassable distance that separates Him from any conceivable creature that ever was, or ever could be, created. We have to praise God also for ourselves and for what He has been to *us*. We are to praise Him because He is our Creator, and made us out of nothing. "For Thy will they were, and have been created." We praise Him because He is our last end, and therefore, by the very law of our being, we should be constantly tending towards Him, as every stream is bound to find its way towards the ocean.

To make the worship of God complete and fitting, however, something more is required, and that is petition—asking, entreating, and begging of God for all that we want. The worship of the saints and angels is nothing but adoration and praise, because they are already placed in a state of unchangeable happiness; but we, who are upon our trial, are constantly in need of fresh gifts, and must therefore constantly ask of God. St. Paul says: "Be nothing solicitous: but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God" (Phil. iv. 6).

Petition, "in everything," is the way in which we are to show our constant dependence upon God. If you do not pray, if you do not ask for anything, it clearly shows that you have forgotten

how dependent you are upon Him. That men may always remember this dependence, God has ordained asking as the condition for obtaining His gifts. It is not as if He did not already know all that we want. "Your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things" (St. Matt. vi. 32). He wishes *you* to know that you need them, and that they are to be obtained from Him. Our Lord, therefore, says to us: "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you" (St. Matt. vii. 7).

Prayer, therefore, in the sense of petition, is necessary to complete the worship of God for all those who are living upon earth.

These are the essential parts of the worship which is due to God; but for mortal men, made up of body and soul, something else is required, or our worship would still be imperfect. We possess a great many different faculties and powers—and all of these, each in its own way, must take part in God's service. We must therefore *serve* God, as well as adore, and praise, and beg of Him. We do this by the virtue of *religion*, which makes us pay to God a distinct formal homage and service, in which all these qualities of true worship are offered to Him together, and are offered in the way which He has been pleased to direct.

This service must, of course, begin by being an internal worship. We must worship God "in spirit and in truth," or we do not worship Him at all. External homage is but the sign of the devotion of our hearts, and the external sign, without the real thing expressed, would be but a mockery. Such a worship would have no value whatever in God's sight, and, indeed, would be but an insult. "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." These words were the terrible reproach, spoken to the Jews in the Old Law, which our Lord Himself applied to the Pharisees. We must, then, begin to worship God from our souls, and make the external homage we pay Him a true representation of the feelings of our hearts.

Interior worship is chiefly found in the homage of three great faculties. We are told to worship God by faith, hope and charity, and each of these virtues is, if rightly considered, a *true* worship of God, and also an *essential* worship; so that if any one of these three is absent there is no real worship given.

Faith is the worship of the understanding. When we accept and believe all that God teaches us in humble submission to His word, we are worshipping Him with the highest of all our faculties. The distinguishing characteristic of man is his under-

standing. By this power he is raised far above all other creatures upon earth. It is a faculty of immense power and immense pride. It is able to subdue and master everything in this lower creation, and would willingly rule over all things, as it does over the material things it meets with in the world. When we oblige this mighty faculty to own a superior, and to confess itself baffled and unable to comprehend, then, indeed, we are offering the highest kind of worship to God that our nature affords. If men *refuse* this one sacrifice all others are insufficient. Those who will not bow their understandings to accept what God pleases to teach them, cannot please God. No other sacrifice will take its place. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of God."

The virtue of hope is also a worship. By it we make God and His promises the object of our *desires*. "Where the treasure is, there also the heart will be." If you do not make God your treasure and the ultimate object of your desires, it is vain to say that you are worshipping Him as God. If the real thing that you desire is something apart from God, you refuse to Him the worship of a large and important part of your faculties.

This applies still more to the virtue of charity. God must be the object, not only of the understanding *and* of the desires, but also of the heart—that is to say, of the affections. If you refuse to give God the worship of the affections, then all the rest is of little value. "If I deliver my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." "My son, give Me thy heart." This is the kind of worship which Almighty God asks from men before all things. Nothing will supply the place of it. You may give your time and your money and your labour to God, but all will be in vain if you do not also give Him the worship of your heart, by giving Him the first place in your affections. These three kinds of worship must be united. The worship of the understanding, the worship of the desires, and the worship of the affections, must be joined together to make a service acceptable to God.

The Psalmist says: "Let all that is within me praise the name of the Lord"—and a true worship must be one in which *all* the faculties are united. We must remember, however, that every true worship implies a submisssion to God, and is shown by obedience. If you have not the will to obey God it is plain that you are not worshipping Him. As I said before, obedience is the real test of all the other virtues—and without it all virtuous sentiments are liable to delusion.

Such is the internal worship of God which ought to be found in our souls; but there must be an outward worship also. Interior feelings are very apt to mean very little, unless they are put into some tangible form. If there is no means of expressing them, they are very soon forgotten. Besides this, men are made up of both soul and body, and it is only reasonable that both the soul and the body should take their share in paying homage to God. We find, therefore, that there always has been some kind of external worship, and we cannot fancy any sort of religion without it. Man is not only made up of body and soul, but he is also a *social* being, so there must be some kind of *social* or united worship offered to God by the society of man in common.

The natural law, as I said just now, tells us to worship God, and tells us that it is our first duty—and our very condition here, upon earth, shows that the worship must be external and common to society, and, therefore, must consist not only in feelings, but in external forms and observances. From this follows the obligation of observing all the things lawfully commanded as part of God's service. We are not only to adore, praise, and worship God in spirit, but we must also perform the external acts by which our interior worship is expressed.

I have now tried, my dear brethren, to explain to you the importance of the worship of God, and to urge upon you our Lord's words: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve;" and, moreover, to show you that this command embraces a great number of duties.

We *mean* to worship God, but have we always done so?—are we doing it now? The Prophet Jeremias says to the Jews: "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord fraudulently" (Jer. xlviii. 10). How often do men defraud Almighty God of His due! How few give to Him that proper worship and obedience which belong to Him! In what a grudging spirit is it generally given! At least let us be *convinced* of the importance of this great duty of worshipping God, and we may succeed in doing it better than we have hitherto done.

But I said before, there are thousands who live in the perpetual breach of the First Commandment. Let us see who they are, so as to be sure we are not amongst them. There are some who are obstinately rebellious against God. It is the original vice of the human race, and is constantly coming up in some shape or other.

Almighty God once said to the Jews: "Of old time thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast burst my bands, and thou saidst I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20). And the same words may, unfortu-

nately, be applied to many people now. "Who is the Lord that I should serve Him!" is the cry of human pride and rebellion, and there are always to be found many who listen to it. These, however, are not the only ones who habitually break the First Commandment. A great many men do not say this, or even think it, but they do not trouble themselves about religion. They "care for none of these things"—that is to say, they never will allow themselves to think seriously about them. Perhaps they make it worse by talking of religion as a thing "good for women and children," and so treat it with a kind of contemptuous favour and patronage. Is such a state of mind much better than an obstinate spirit of rebellion? Any one who treats religion in this spirit is not only habitually breaking the First Commandment, but is in a state of mind opposed to the very idea of worshipping God. This is, indeed, a miserable condition, but, unfortunately, is common enough. You will not unfrequently find kind, good, honourable men, whom everybody respects, who are good in every relation of life, and yet cannot be brought to see or to attend to what is their very first duty upon earth. Perhaps it sometimes happens that their own good qualities in other respects blind their eyes to this one great deficiency. Let us pray God at least to keep us from this blindness, for it looks very much as if our Lord's words to the Pharisees—"Amen I say to you, that the publicans and the harlots shall go the kingdom of God before you" (St. Matt. xxi. 31)—will be fulfilled in them.

Besides these you find some who mean to be religious, and are religious in a fashion. They will sometimes do a good deal for religion, and profess to care a great deal about it, but unfortunately they put religion in the *second* place. This world somehow always holds the *first* place. They "mind the main chance"—that is, they look to success and prosperity in life—they want to get on and rise in the world, and they make it their chief object to do so. Our Lord says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added to you;" but *they* say just the contrary. They are willing enough to be religious in their way, but take care that their religion shall never seriously interfere with their success or convenience in life. They will let it be second, but not first. I am afraid God will not accept such a service as this. The very idea of God's service is that it comes first of all things. If it does not do this it is a "fraudulent service, which denies to God the honour due to Him.

A good many more fail to serve God because they grudge Him the necessary trouble. They would be good Christians if

it didn't take time and pains. They know they cannot succeed in anything *else* without giving proper time and trouble to it, but still they think it very hard that God and their salvation should need any labour. If they thought, as St. Paul did, of a Christian life they would never be so foolish. "Know you not that they that run in the race all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one" (I Cor. ix. 24).

Consider whether you yourselves, my dear brethren, look upon the service of God in the right light—that is, as a thing requiring labour and diligence, time and self-sacrifice. If you do not, is it not to be feared that you are not giving to God the sort of worship which belongs to him?

Besides those who go wrong from a false idea of what God's service is and what it requires, there are a great many who know quite well what they ought to do, and yet they do not do it. Take those who neglect Mass on Sundays without any real reason. They know perfectly well that this is the very first thing they are required to do as an act of service to God, and that they cannot possibly worship Him as they ought without it, and yet they stay away! They know that it is commanded by the Church, under pain of mortal sin, and commanded *because* it is an essential part of God's service, by which the adoration and praise due to Him are to be paid; and yet they will not take the trouble to assist at Mass. What is this but to break the First Commandment in a serious way, besides violating the precept of the Church?

This is true of all the things which are commanded by the Church for God's worship. It is by the voice of the Church that God tells us what are the particular acts by which He is to be worshipped, and it is impossible to worship Him properly unless we diligently attend, not only to the general duty of serving God, but to the particular way in which He desires this duty to be performed.

In conclusion, let us beg of God, my dear brethren, to show us how to order our lives, so as to make them a continued and complete performance of that service which is the one great duty of our lives; "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve."

SERMON XXXV.

Idolatry.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (I. St. John v. 21).

THESE are words, my dear brethren, which the Apostle St. John addressed to the early Christians. It may, perhaps, seem strange that he should tell them to keep from idols when they had just given up idolatry to become Christians; and it will very likely seem still more strange that I should apply them to you. In this nineteenth century, you will say, there is no fear of idolatry. I think, however, we shall find a good deal to say about the subject, and, perhaps, a good many things that we may apply to ourselves.

First of all, what is an idol? It is any creature which is put into God's place. It is a false god, which is worshipped instead of the true God. Sometimes it is not put into the place of God, but put up beside Him. "Thou shalt not have strange God's before me." It is just as much idolatry if you put up a strange god *beside* the true God, to share His worship, as if you worship it instead of Him. God will not share His honour with any of His creatures; so that if you do not worship Him *alone* you are not worshipping Him at all.

The Philistines wanted to divide their worship between God and an idol. We read in the Old Testament that after a great battle they captured the Ark of God, and put it up beside their own idol Dagon, so that they might worship both God and Dagon. The result, however, was that God cast down the idol like a log on the ground, and sent a number of plagues amongst the Philistines.

It is idolatry, then, if you give even a part of God's worship to creatures. Idolatry is, as you know, one of the greatest crimes that man can commit. Now, let us see what it is that makes it so grievous. It is an injustice to God. God made us, and made us for Himself, and we therefore belong to Him, and He has a right to all our worship. If you take away a part of this honour which belongs to Him, and give it to any other, you are guilty of an injustice and a treason against your Maker. The Prophet Isaias says, "And now, O Lord, Thou art our Father, and we are clay: and Thou art our Maker, and we are all the works of

Thy hands" (Isaias lxiv. 8). Just as the vessels of clay, which are made, belong to whoever made them, so do we all belong to God, and are bound to give Him our worship. If, therefore, you take away this worship from Him, and, as St. Paul says, "worship the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever," it is clear that you are guilty of a grievous injustice.

It would not matter what creature it was that was put in the place of the Creator. It might be the most glorious and beautiful creature ever made—still it would be the same injustice to the Creator. But what, in fact, were the creatures that men chose as objects of worship? You read how the Israelites made to themselves a golden calf, and worshipped it instead of God, and, as the Scripture says, they changed their glory into the likeness of a calf that eateth grass" (Ps. cv. 20). Men in those days worshipped not only such idols as these, but also the "host of heaven"—that is, the sun and the stars. Not contented with this, they chose for gods all kinds of animals—birds and beasts, and creeping things—and worshipped them instead of the true God. Can anything have been a greater injustice and affront to their Creator? This injustice makes the great crime of idolatry, but it is not the only evil of it. Idolatry is also a degradation to man. It lowers and disgraces the nature that God has given him. St. Paul says, "Being the offspring of God, we must not suppose the Divinity to be like unto gold, or silver or stone, the graving of art, and device of man" (Acts xvii. 29).

When men forgot this, which was the true teaching of their own nature, the natural consequence was that they degraded themselves, and brought themselves down to the level of the creatures they adored. "The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of the hands of men. They have mouths and speak not: they have eyes, and see not: they have ears, and hear not: they have noses, and smell not: they have hands, and feel not: they have feet, and walk not: neither shall they cry out through their throat. Let them that make them become like them, and all such as trust in them" (Psalms cxiii. 16). And what led people into this crime of idolatry? Very often it was that under these idols was concealed the enemy of God. It was really the devil whom they worshipped; so that idolatry was not merely something taken away from Almighty God, but an actual going over to His enemies.

I said before that, in considering the sin of idolatry, it did not matter substantially what the creature was that was put in God's place. Whether you worship the greatest and most intellectual being ever made, or the ugliest idol that savages ever cut out of a log, it is substantially the same thing. If you were

to give God's honour to the greatest of the archangels it would be just as much idolatry as if you worshipped the golden calf of the Jews. An instance of this is given by St. John. In his vision he saw an angel so glorious that he supposed him to be God, and would have worshipped him; "and I fell down before his feet to adore him, and he saith to me: See thou do it not, I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus; adore God" (Apoc. xix. 10).

As compared with God, all creatures are on a level, and are all *fellow-servants*, and it would be a crime to give even the smallest part of the honour due to their Master to the greatest of them all. But you will, perhaps, ask, as I before said, what is the use of dwelling upon such obvious truths?—how can all this apply to us at the present day? We have no intention of worshipping stocks and stones. That is quite true, my dear brethren, but you may become idolaters easily enough for all that.

The sort of idolatry in which men fall down and worship a statue, or an animal, or any created object—formal idolatry we may call it—is not a danger at the present time, but there is another sort that is a *great* danger. It is against this principally that St. John warns us when he says: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

This sort of idolatry consists not in falling down before creatures and saying your prayers to them, but in making them your last end. If a man makes anything his last end—that is to say, the great object to which all his thoughts and desires are directed, and which, in fact, engrosses all his faculties—that thing becomes his god in a very intelligible sense. We have a great many *subordinate* ends in life—things that we are trying hard to get—but these are only means to something else. If we make a thing the object of our desires and thoughts and exertions, not as a means to something else, but for itself, then we have transferred to it the worship which belongs to God, and are making it an idol.

Our Lord tells us about Dives and Lazarus. Dives was a rich man who "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day," and he "died and was buried in hell." What was the reason of this? We are not told of any special harm that he did to any one. His great crime seems to have been that he made his "purple and fine linen," and sumptuous feasting—that is, all the luxuries and refinements of life—his last end. He, perhaps, lived for them alone, and neither cared nor thought about anything beyond them. If such was the case, he made these things his god, and was duly punished for his idolatry.

This opens to us, my brethren, a very serious view of the question, and concerns us very much, because it is a temptation to which we are all exposed. The more wealthy and comfortable and "civilized" the world becomes the greater is the danger, and the greater our need of the Apostle's warning.

We will take a little time, then, to consider what are the idols that are put up for worship in our day, and then we shall see how to avoid them.

"The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of the hands of men." Silver and gold, and all the skill of man to fashion it! Very beautiful they were. All the genius of man was taxed to the utmost to make them, and it was their beauty and costliness that made them so dangerous. We must not be surprised, then, to find that things, which in themselves are very beautiful and really good, are sometimes a great danger to us also.

There are many sorts of idols. Some of them are immaterial —that is, existing only as ideas in the mind of man. Schemes and theories and feelings, sometimes of the noblest kind, may be made idols. Let us take a common example. Patriotism—the love of our country—is certainly one of the noblest feelings that men have. It is a grand and unselfish and ennobling sentiment, but do you not every day see it made into an idol? If a man makes the love of his country and its service his last end, so that it is the object of all his thoughts and desires, and stands between him and the service of God and the law of God, it is plainly an idol. In the same way the thirst after knowledge may be an idol—so may poetry and art, and the love of nature and of beauty of any kind. You will see hundreds in the world around who are making gods of such things. Then come idols not so noble as these, but quite as common—ambition, power, fame, and fashion. The world is crowded with their worshippers. How many men and women spend their lives in the pursuit of fashion? The one great thought which occupies the minds of many is, how to get into a little higher social position; to get noticed by those above them in society, or, perhaps, to be able to look down on those who are now their equals. How many confessors can fashion count? How many martyrs lay down their lives for it in one shape or other? If we only worshipped God as diligently as some of these people worship fashion and fame, and rank and power, we should be saints indeed. We all find it hard not to bow down before such idols as these, and, therefore, we stand in great need of the admonition, "Keep yourselves from idols."

I now come to another class of idols which are more tangible,

These are like those of the Gentiles, "silver and gold"—not in the shape of beautifully-moulded statues, but of money. St. Paul speaks of covetousness, which, he says, "is a serving of idols," and declares that the covetous have "no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. v. 5). The love of money is, indeed, specially the god of this world, and in whichever direction you look you will see its worship going on. People of all ranks and conditions—rich people and poor people—wise people and ignorant ones—are to be found bowing down before it. I do not speak of those who are merely trying to get money—that is natural enough, and right enough, too, in its way. I mean those who make money-getting the one great, engrossing thought of their lives. See how people admire and respect a man who has plenty of money, as if the very fact of having it rendered him almost a superior being! See how people give up their time and their health and happiness in order to obtain riches, which very likely they will never be able to enjoy! You have very often, I dare say, read of misers who have spent their whole lives hoarding up money. To add shilling to shilling men have been known to give up everything the world can offer, and unfortunately their eternal salvation as well, and, at last, literally to starve themselves to death for the sake of their money. Is not this making a god of it just as much as if they went down on their knees and prayed to it? They could not put gold and silver in the place of God more effectually if it were in the shape of a golden calf, to which they offered sacrifice.

This, of course, is not the common way in which money is made a god. It is generally not so much *money*, as money's *worth*, which is worshipped. Most men worship money that they may get fine houses and fine clothes, and all the dignity and importance attaching to wealth. In this sense it is a most terrible idol, and draws away multitudes from the service of God. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven." The "rich man," is not he who happens to be well off, but he who loves money and makes it his god. He may, indeed, be a very poor man in actual wealth, but still he may make money his god; so that the worship of money may be found in a poor humble cottage just as easily as in a palace.

Gold—the love of money—is the special idol of advancing life. As men grow old, the temptation to avarice is very apt to increase. In youth there is another idol—the love of pleasure and excitement. How fascinating pleasure appears to the young! To them it seems the most gorgeous idol, arrayed in every beautiful colour that the heart can conceive. No wonder that

young men and young women are tempted to bow down and worship it! They have not found out yet that the gold is all tinsel, and the brightness all delusion. The day will come when they will find this out for themselves; but, in the meanwhile, it is a terrible idol, and many there are who forsake their God to worship it. The world is full of its votaries, who spend their lives and sacrifice their time, health, and life itself in its service. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"—these things constitute the god of this world.

Let us take one particular phase of this idolatry—the love of eating and drinking. St. Paul says: "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ: whose end is destruction: whose god is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame: who mind earthly things" (Phil. iii. 18).

It is deplorable to think how many there are, at the present day, to whom the apostle's words apply. There are thousands who would be good Christians only, unfortunately, to use his strong language, they have made a "god of their belly."

Such people almost exactly imitate Dives; they "feast sumptuously every day." They make their dinner and good living the one great object of their thoughts, and never grudge anything to satisfy their appetite. They naturally become hard to the poor, and never can find anything to give away.

This fault is not confined to the rich. A great many poor people also fall into it. The moment they have money they squander it upon eating and drinking. They cannot be brought to make provision for the future, or lay up anything against times of scarcity, and, perhaps, even grudge the necessary payment for their children's education—and all for the love of eating and drinking. It is hardly necessary now to speak of the drunkard. Drunkenness is, as you all know, the crying evil of our country and time, and pervades every class of society. This, I suppose, every one would acknowledge to be a most perfect specimen of an idolatry. A drunkard makes drink his idol and spends his life in its worship. Can there, indeed, be a more thorough-going worship? He sacrifices to his idol, without any scruple, his worldly prosperity and good name, his wife and children, his health, and, very often, life itself. It would be well if that were all, but it is not. In a great many instances he sacrifices his soul too. Nothing can be too great a sacrifice for the god he has chosen.

There is one more class of idols about which I must speak, and this will conclude my list. I mean idols of flesh and blood

—that is, the inordinate love of our fellow-creatures. What makes this dangerous is that love of this kind may be, of itself, quite right and holy. It is our *duty* to love our fellow-creatures, and to give to some of them the most sincere and tender affection. Unfortunately, this love may become a temptation, and may lead men into a kind of idolatry.

Women make idols of their husbands, husbands make idols of their wives—that is, they allow their earthly affection to come between them and their duty to God.

This is no new thing. We have all read how Solomon in his old age was led away into actual idolatry, and bowed down before the gods of the heathen. He began with idols of flesh and blood, and, from idolizing his wives, was led on to worship idols of wood and stone. We see the same thing happening every day. Men are often enough led away from their faith and the practice of their religion by inordinate love for their wives, or children, or by some other earthly affection.

What I have said of husbands and wives applies, of course, to many other relations of life. Our Lord says: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me;" and again: "a man's enemies shall be they of his own household" (St. Matt. x. 36). What does our Lord mean by these words but to warn us against letting even the nearest and dearest of earthly affections come between us and what we owe to our Creator?

To take another phase of the same subject. You see women *idolize* their children. They lavish on them an unreasoning love and an inordinate care and over-anxiety, so as to be completely "wrapped up" in these children. What is the consequence? Should God, who gave them, think fit to take them away again, then comes despair and sometimes rebellion. I am afraid that people very often commit serious sins by this over-affection, or rather idolatry. Can we be surprised that God should sometimes make these very inordinate affections their own punishment, and that His justice should sometimes strike through those very gifts that have been made occasions of sin?

If we love *any* creature too much—no matter how good that creature may be—we may rely upon two things: that our hearts will be turned away from God, and that the creature which He gave for a blessing will become a curse.

To put what I have been saying in a few words, we shall never be tempted to kneel down and worship images, but we are tempted, and shall be tempted, to that love and worship of creatures by which we make idols of them. It is, indeed, our

great danger in life, and the very thing by which we are most ensnared. I do not mean that every inordinate love is an idolatry, but it is something on the road to it. You must be on your guard, therefore, against all creatures. Good things, as I have said, and evil things, noble and ignoble, spiritual and material, all may become idols to us.

How, you may ask, are you to tell when you are beginning to love anything with an inordinate love? When you find your love for a creature getting between you and God you must take care. A really *good* love for any creature ought to lead you *to* God, and not away from Him. If you find yourself putting your duty to God and your love to a creature into the scales, as it were, and weighing them, it is clear that there is great danger. If you *prefer* any creature to God, so as to be willing to commit a sin for its sake, you have made it an idol; and when you even allow the two to be put in comparison, you are already on the *way* to doing this.

The true way to keep ourselves from the worship of idols, my dear brethren, is to worship God as we ought. If you give to Him the full and earnest devotion of your hearts, and worship Him with all your strength, then there is no fear of creatures taking His place. You will then feel that all creatures, however beautiful and glorious and worthy of your love they may be, are as *nothing* in comparison to their Maker. He is infinitely above the highest that ever was created, and all of them together, and whatever excellence or beauty they may possess is simply His gift—a faint reflection, as it were, of His infinite glory.

All creatures are intended to lead us up step by step to Him. The beautiful things we see and admire on this earth should lead to the consideration of the glories of His kingdom of heaven. The glories of heaven and all the bright choirs of angels and saints, and finally the transcendant majesty and glory of His Blessed Mother, on which we love to dwell—all these are meant to raise our thoughts and affections to the Great Creator of all. If *they* are beautiful, what must He be who made them all by His word, and clothed them with all the majesty they possess? If creatures are so worthy of love, and are able to get such a hold on your hearts, what sort of a love ought you to give to Him from whom they get every quality which makes us love them—for "of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things: to Him be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. xi. 36).

SERMON XXXVI.

False Religions.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. i. 8).

THE great duty imposed upon us, my dear brethren, by the Commandments is to worship God our Creator, and Him alone. I have been explaining the importance of this obligation, and saying that if you want to get to heaven you must adore the Lord your God, and take care to have no strange Gods before Him.

There is something more, however, to be considered in God's worship. It is not enough to serve the true God, but you must also worship Him in the *right way*—that is to say, in the way in which it is His will to be worshipped, according to the rules He has laid down, and not according to your own fancies.

God alone knows His own nature and attributes, and how He ought to be honoured. He only can tell the kind of "religion" which is suited to Him and to us. The moment God has pleased to reveal Himself to men and make known His will to them, it becomes a matter of strict necessity and obligation to carry out His will and worship Him as he has commanded.

This seems too plain and obvious to need any words at all; and yet it is the exact contrary of what you hear every day. "What does it matter about small trifles in religion? How can you be so bigoted as to make a fuss about trivial differences? Why cannot we all fraternize and join together without troubling ourselves about such things? One religion, after all, is pretty much the same as another." I daresay you have heard things like this said hundreds of times, and, my dear brethren, you will be told they are "common sense." It is "a common-sense way of looking at religion," according to a great many people."

Such things, however, like a good many others sometimes called common sense, are very foolish. To say that one religion is as good as another is just the same as saying that neither of them is true—or else, that truth and falsehood are equally good. In the same way, when people talk about "trifling differences of creeds," it means either that God has never given us any revelation, or else that it is no affair of ours to attend to what He has revealed. Every false religion and false worship is a crime and

an insult to Almighty God. It is, *in fact*, a falsehood—something untrue in itself, and, therefore, as such, an abomination to God. It is an act of carelessness, where all the care man can give is not enough, and it is an act of insubordination, despising God's regulations and the authorities He has established. All this is contained in every act of false worship *in itself*. When you come to consider this act as the doing of some particular person, then comes the question how far it is by his own fault. That depends upon the means of knowledge which he possesses. If any one offers to God a worship which, in his heart, he sincerely believes to be the worship which God has ordained, that does not make his worship a true and a right one in itself, but it is an excuse for him. What he does is done in ignorance; and if it is not his own fault that he is ignorant, God will not condemn him for it; but that will not make a thing true which is really false.

But people say: "What does it matter about little doctrinal questions, if your heart is all right?" Let us get the answer, not from ourselves, but from the Holy Scriptures. Our Lord sent out His Apostles to preach the Gospel, and finishes His commission with these words: "Teaching them to observe *all* these things whatsoever I have commanded you" (St. Mat. xxviii. 20). And, in another place, He says: "He that shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (St. Mat. v. 19).

St. Paul, after he had been preaching the Gospel, says, in the words I put for my text: "If any one, even an angel from heaven, preaches another Gospel, let him be anathema." This does not look much as if it "didn't matter."

Again, people sometimes say, "It can't signify in what *way* you offer up your worship to God." That was what King Saul seemed to think when he offered sacrifice. The Prophet Samuel had delayed and didn't come in time—so the King went and offered the sacrifice himself. It was this very act that made Almighty God reject him. "Thou hast done foolishly, and hast not kept the Commandments of the Lord thy God: and if thou hadst not done thus the Lord would now have established thy kingdom over Israel for ever" (I. Kings xiii. 13). That was the consequence of thinking that one way of worshipping God was as good as another.

Take another case. "Nadab and Abiu, the sons of Aaron taking their censors, put fire therein and incense on it, offering before the Lord strange fire: which was not commanded them. And fire coming out from the Lord destroyed them: and they died before the Lord" (Levit. x. 1). I daresay these priests, the

sons of Aaron, thought that one fire was as good as another, and that "little external things" in the worship of God didn't matter —as a good many people say now; but God's judgment was very different. These examples show what I have been saying; that it is not enough to worship the true God with *any* kind of worship, but that you must give Him the worship, which he has commanded with all the reverence and exactness in your power. That is to say, you must have the *true religion.*

Now, let us consider what *religion* means. People do not always stop to consider how much is implied by this word religion. It contains a great deal. In the first place, to have the true religion you must have true faith—that is, a correct knowledge of God as far as He has been pleased to reveal Himself to men. St. Paul says, "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for" (Heb. xi. 1). Faith, therefore, must be the foundation of religion. A religious worship in which people joined together in forms of prayer and external observances without any agreement about faith, so that each one meant a different thing, would be like walls built up without any foundation to rest upon. Moreover, it must be the *true* faith. If you are mistaken as to what God has revealed, and have a false idea of Him and His truth, then the worship must be a false worship, and, of itself, cannot but be displeasing to God.

Next to a true knowledge of God Himself comes the true knowledge of His will—that is, of right and wrong. Here, again, it is not enough to take our own notions on these subjects, and think that anything will do so long as we are sincere about it. We have to find out correctly what is the real meaning of the law He has put into our hearts, and what He has been pleased to reveal to men. These two things make the foundation of true religion. But that is not enough. We must also know in what way God wills to be honoured by men. What is the kind of prayer, of praise and of sacrifice which He requires at our hands as an acknowledgement that we are His creatures? It is not for men to invent these things out of their own heads, but to study carefully what He has ordered. For example, if He has been pleased to establish a sacrifice on earth, as He has done, then it is clear that every religious worship which ignores and disregards this sacrifice is a false religion.

One more thing is necessary for the true religion: that is, that it should be carried out by the particular authority which He has appointed. In the Old Law God appointed Aaron and his family to be His priests, and every sacrifice must come through their hands. If any unauthorized person presumed to offer sacrifice, that sacrifice became at once a sacrilegious act. It was

no answer to say that he could carry out the regulations made for sacrifice quite as well as Aaron's sons. "Thou hast commanded Thy Commandments to be kept most diligently" (Ps. cxviii. 4). These words of the Psalmist apply to all God's commandments, but specially to what He has commanded for His own worship.

In order to worship God properly, then, you must have these four things: you must have the true faith, a correct knowledge of God's Commandments; you must know the kind of worship He has been pleased to sanction, and the authority to which He has entrusted the care of His worship. These things together make up the true religion. Nature tells you that your first duty is to worship the God that made you, and from this duty follows the obligation of finding out how it is to be done, or, at any rate, of doing your best to find out.

If you have any work to do, you know the first thing is to discover *how* it is to be done. You do not dream of saying, "It doesn't matter whether I am going the right way about it or not." In the same way, if you have a journey to make, clearly the first thing is to ask for the right road. You don't say one road is as good as another. This is common sense in the ordinary affairs of life, and yet it is exactly what people do *not* do in religion. It is the duty of every man to find the true religion *if he can.* I say this because it often happens, especially at the present day, that people *cannot* find the true religion.

A great many good people, partly from want of means of knowledge, partly from prejudices in which they have been brought up, are quite unable to find the true Church—that is, to know that it *is* the true Church. Well, if they really have used all reasonable diligence in looking for it, and it is not their fault that they have not found it, such people are not responsible to God for being out of it. Almighty God never requires of us *anything* that we *cannot* do, and when we have done our best He will accept our good intentions. But it is plain that we must have done our best. Nothing can possibly be an excuse for a false religion except that you could not find the true one, and thought that the religion you professed *was* the true one. What sort of an excuse would it be to say, as so many do, "I had no time to attend to it, and didn't think it mattered." Such an answer at once convicts a man of great disrespect and carelessness in God's service. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice," our Lord says; and again, "One thing is necessary." That "one thing" plainly is to serve God as He ought to be served. Again, it is no excuse to say, "I went on as my parents went before me." If that were a right principle,

it is clear that we should all still be pagans, because idolatry was at one time prevalent in the world. But it is not a true principle. Your parents had to find out the true faith according to the lights and means of knowledge they had, and so have you. They will be judged by their light, and you by yours.

In the same way, it is no excuse to say that one religion is "more convenient" than another, or that one offers more temporal advantages than another. Many people are strongly tempted to choose their religion by what they find convenient. One religion offers more opportunities of getting on in the world, or making good friends, than another, and the tempter tries to put out of sight that it is your plain duty to embrace the *true* religion and not the convenient religion. Again, people sometimes choose religion by their taste and fancies. They like the music and singing of one church, or the forms of prayer used there, or they are attracted by the eloquence of some clergyman. It may be that they have received kindness at the hands of particular people, and choose their faith accordingly. This would be all very well if religion were meant to please ourselves; but if it is to please God, we must not look to what suits our own fancy, but to what is the will and ordinance of God as far as we are able to find out.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which a man having found, hideth, and for joy therefore goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field" (St. Matt. xiii. 44). This parable is often very exactly realized in the search for the true religion. A man sometimes has pretty nearly to "sell all that he has" to get it. That is, he must give up worldly advantages and friends, and often his own tastes and feelings as well—but, then, in the end, it turns out to be a real "treasure" or a "pearl of great price."

I have dwelt upon this at considerable length, my dear brethren, not because you have any need to search for the true religion, or any doubt as to possessing it, but because you often hear plausible arguments in favour of what is called "liberality." "Why not all join together in worship?"—"why keep up these little differences?"—"why not be of the religion of your friends? you know they are well meaning and religious people"—"why be so bigoted and exclusive in your opinions?" These things you hear so often, that it is quite necessary to see clearly and to hold fast the plain principle, that we must serve God in the way He has been pleased to appoint—and *no other*—however much any other way may please ourselves or our friends.

We, I have said, have no difficulty as to the faith which is the foundation of God's worship, or the sort of worship to be offered,

or the authority to be followed in what we do. Our Lord sent His Apostles to be witnesses to the truth, and guides to men in religion. He said to them: "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i. 8). And, again: "Going, therefore, teach all nations: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (St. Matt. xxvii. 19).

The duty of worshipping God in the way which He has appointed, and no other, gives a complete explanation of the Church's way of acting. A complaint is constantly made that the Catholic Church is so "bigoted." This really means nothing else but that the Church is earnest and determined in maintaining the faith exact and unchanged. It is said that the world was thrown into an uproar about a syllable, and this is said as a reproach; but it is literally true, and this is the glory of the Catholic Church. Rather than give up a single one of the truths which God has revealed, and of which He has made her the guardian, the Catholic Church would allow whole nations to fall away, or any other calamity to happen that Providence might permit.

We shall find also in this the explanation of the importance given to details—the "fuss" that is,—about vestments and ceremonies, about lights and incense. If these things really are a part of the worship of God duly settled by His command, or, at any rate, under His authority, it is clear that you *must* make a fuss about them. Things that are small and trivial of themselves become important if they belong to God's worship. "Thou hast commanded that Thy Commandments be served exceedingly."

Think of God's judgment about the "strange fire" used by Nadab and Abiu. You may find plenty of such instances in Holy Scripture to show how stern Almighty God is about things which concern His worship, even when they seem little in our eyes.

If external matters, such as chasubles and lighted candles, are merely matters of personal taste, it is, of course, silly and weak to attach importance to them, or trouble other people about them; but, on the other hand, whatever the Church commands as important in God's service must never be neglected or omitted to please men, and whatever the Church allows and encourages is always good and meritorious to be done when circumstances permit.

From what I have been saying you will see the sin of *tampering* with the faith. By "tampering," I mean saying or doing anything to the injury of the true faith, or which is disloyal

to God's Church. Good people sometimes tamper with the faith by their speeches and opinions, or by their concessions to others, in a way which they do not quite realize. You hear them, for example, criticizing very freely. They don't like this usage, and they don't see the use of that; this idea is obsolete, and the other practice is unnecessary. The Church might very well give way in this particular, and alter her method of acting in another. I am afraid, my dear brethren, we have all heard rather too much of this, for there are a great many good Catholics who would like to be wiser than the Catholic Church.

Again, the same thing is done commonly enough in another way—that is, by an unreasonable sympathy with those out of the Church, or, rather, with their religious *systems*. It is natural enough. In false religions there is often a great deal of good to be found, and it may be a great deal of good which particularly appeals to our personal feelings. For instance, in the old Roman paganism there was a great deal of grandeur, and sometimes a great deal of high principle. This was, of course part of the natural virtue and religious feeling given to man which is to be found in every system. The goodness and heroism displayed were, no doubt, sometimes a stumbling-block to the early Christians, and sometimes made paganism look to them not quite the bitter antagonist to the Christian faith that it really was.

The same thing happens, of course, much more frequently at the present day. The Church of England—the most powerful body opposing the Catholic Church in this country—has a great deal that is beautiful and good about it. It would be strange if it were not so, considering that the greater part of its doctrine and ritual is borrowed from the Catholic Church. Many of the prayers in use in the Church of England, for example, are old Catholic prayers, modified when occasion needs.

All this excellence, however, does not prevent it from being, as a whole, simply a false religion, and an unauthorized worship of God, which cannot, in its nature, be anything but an opponent of the true Church of God. If a Catholic allows himself to be carried away by a sympathy for such a system, because of beauties that may be found in it, or by old memories that stir his heart, what is this but an unlawful tampering with the faith? A soldier has no right to indulge in sympathies with the enemy. If he does so he is in great danger of becoming a traitor.

What is true of the Church of England is true generally of the other bodies surrounding us. Take any class of dissenters you will, and you find many excellencies. You will often see great zeal and piety amongst the members of these sects, and

much that you cannot but acknowledge to be very good. This, again, is not to be wondered at. In all sects it is not the part of them that is *wrong* that produces these good effects, but the part that is right. It is not the false doctrine introduced into them, but the remains of Catholic truth abiding in them, which is the cause of the good fruit. As I said before, this good does not prevent the system, as a whole, from being false, and from being an opponent to the true faith; and, as such, we have no right to sympathize with it.

You observe, I speak of systems, not of people. A system if it is not the trnth *must* be error, and an opposition to God. Men, however, may be going on in a false system in perfectly good faith, and may be trying heartily to serve God, under the impression that they are, *in fact*, doing His will, as they certainly are in *intention*. This may be the case with thousands about us, and we need have no difficulty in believing that their zeal for God and their love of God are very sincere, although they are, unconsciously, involved in a false system. If such is the case, why should we not heartily sympathize with them? "I am a partaker with all them that fear Thee, and that keep Thy commandments" (Ps. cxviii. 63). So says the Psalmist, and so should we say of everybody that really loves God and has a zeal for his service, even though he is, by his misfortune, involved in error. You cannot, therefore, be too kind, or considerate, or gentle with the individuals with whom you come in contact, so long, at any rate, as you can even *hope* that they are in good faith; but, on the other hand, you must not indulge in sentimental admiration or regard for any system out of the pale of the Church, however beautiful it may appear in some aspects; because all such systems are, necessarily, false worships, and enemies of the Church of Christ.

There is another kind of tampering with faith which is still more dangerous, and that is by yielding to the so-called "liberal" spirit of the age, and talking and acting as if, after all, religious differences didn't so much matter. Sometimes this is said in actual words, sometimes by demeanour, and sometimes by not speaking when you should speak. I have, however, said quite enough on this point.

It now only remains for me to warn you once more of that great duty to which you are called—that of serving the True and Living God, and serving Him according to His revealed Will and under guidance of the authority which He has established. This is, indeed, a privilege. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to them that are without, all things are done in parables" (St. Mark iv. 11).

Again, it may be applied to you what our Lord says: "Amen I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them" (St. Matt. xiii. 17).

The religious knowledge which God has given to you, in preference to a great many, ought to be a "pearl of great price"—a "hidden treasure," from which you can continually draw good things for the glory of God and your own salvation. As it is a great and undeserved gift of God to you, you ought to make a constant return of gratitude. This gratitude is best shown by the firmness and boldness with which you uphold this holy faith, and the assiduity with which you practise it.

Our one desire should be to be able, when the day comes, to say, with St. Paul: "I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord, the Just Judge, will render to me in that day" (II. Tim. iv. 7). Amen.

SERMON XXXVII.

Faith.

"Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are those that have not seen and yet have believed" (St. John xx. 29).

It is the duty of every one of God's rational creatures to find out the true religion, and there can be only one true religion. This, my dear brethren, is a first principal of the natural law and of common sense, about which I was speaking in my last sermon. There can be but one religion, because it is plainly impossible that God should teach one set of truths to some people, and another—inconsistent—set of doctrines to other people. If God teaches us that a doctrine is true in one time and at one place, we are quite sure it is also true at all other times and places. God is unchangeable, and truth is unchangeable, so whatever God has taught us as an essential truth must always be true. "Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day, and the same for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8). Whenever, therefore, people talk of there being a number of religions which are equally true, and say that it doesn't matter which you profess, they really mean—that is, if they think what they are saying—that all religions are false.

Men are bound to search for the one true religion, then; but to embrace it requires the virtue of faith, and about faith I am going to speak to-day. It is one of the most important things connected with the First Commandment, and requires much attention.

In the first place, it is absolutely essential. "Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him" (Heb. xi. 6). It is the very foundation of all our religion, on which all we do to please God must necessarily be built. It is the very instrument of our justification. "We also believe in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by the faith of Christ"—(Gall. ii. 16)—as St. Paul tells us; and, again, he says: "By grace you are saved through faith" (Ep. ii. 8). St. Peter speaks of faith in the same way, as the means by which people are made holy. When he describes the conversion of the Gentiles he says: "And God who knoweth the hearts gave testimony, giving unto them the Holy Ghost as well as to us, and put no

difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts xv. 8).

Now, the first thing you have to understand about faith is that it is a gift of God. God only can give the power really to believe with faith. Men may discuss and inquire till they are tired, but they can never arrive at faith simply by their own exertions and cleverness. Very often people fail to find the faith principally because they do not realize that some thing is needed *beyond* their own efforts. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16). "No man can come to Me," our Lord says, "except the Father, who hath sent Me, draw him" (St. John vi. 44). It is, then, a gift of God—a capacity for believing which God infuses into the hearts of men. For this gift something is required besides the bounty of the giver. It is necessary that men should be *ready* to believe—that is, that they should have sufficient humility and desire of light to accept the gift when it is offered. "He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away" (St. Luke i. 53).

We have not very far to look for examples of this. There are many whose habitual state of mind is such as to *refuse* the gift of faith. They are so confident in themselves and their abilities —so sure that they are able to understand all about everything —that there is no room for a gift which implies humility. Again, there are many who are utterly indifferent, and don't *want* to know. They are not *hungry* and have no appetite for the food that faith gives. It is not wonderful under these circumstances that they never get the faith. This is why prayer is often so much better as a means of converting people than argument. If you pray for those whom you wish to convert, and get *them* to pray, you are more likely to put them into the dispositions for faith than if you spent a great deal of time in arguing.

Faith is, however, something else besides a *gift*. It is also a virtue—one of the *theological* virtues it is called. It is not only something which God gives us, but also something which we give to Him. A virtue must be something in which the will has a part, and which requires our own co-operation.

I spoke before of faith being an *adoration*, or *worship* of God, and the highest kind of worship. It is the virtue by which human reason bows down and acknowledges Almighty God, and, by so doing, offers to Him its adoration. I do not mean by this that faith is a violation of reason—that is, that we are obliged to go against what our reason tells us. We cannot do this, because, after all, it is God Himself who has given our reason, and He

asks us for "reasonable service." Our Lord constantly explains that He never asks for faith without having shown a sufficient ground for it. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not" (St. John x. 37).

Faith, then, is no violation of reason, but it humbles, and disciplines, and controls reason very severely, notwithstanding. It is the acknowledgment that reason has a superior in its own line —that is, that there exists something *like* itself, but infinitely surpassing itself. A man cannot fail to understand that God's *power* is infinitely beyond his own, and never dreams of measuring his strength with that of his Creator; but it is difficult for him to realize that the *knowledge* of God is quite as much above his knowledge as the power of God above his power. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts" (Is. lv. 8).

This truth really is obvious when stated, and yet the reason of man makes difficulties in accepting it. From this truth it follows that there must be a great number of things beyond human reason, on which human reason cannot pronounce with anything like confidence or certainty, and on which it ought not to pronounce at all. It also follows that there must be a sanction much higher than the deductions of reason—namely, the revelation of an infinitely superior intelligence. These truths are hard to accept, because they very often involve things which seem to be opposed to the dictates of reason, to be "contrary to common sense," as men say so often and so recklessly.

I say *seem* to be opposed, because, although it is not to be denied that some things in faith are a difficulty to reason, as a general rule, the things which are *said* to be contrary to reason are difficulties *not* to reason, but to *imagination*. You cannot conceive *how* a thing is to be done, or what it will look like when it is done. You see no opening whatever, and the difficulty is quite beyond any means of investigation you possess. People say, "It is against reason." No, not against reason, but against imagination. *Reason* says there may be millions of ways in which it can be done; imagination says, "I cannot conceive how it is possible."

A good illustration of this is given in the text I have placed at the head of this sermon. St. Thomas says: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (St. John xx. 25). St. Thomas, no doubt, considered that he was asking for proof to satisfy his reason. In reality, he

had plenty of proof for his *reason* in the testimony of the other Apostles; but what he really wanted was something to satisfy his imagination. He wanted to be able to feel and touch for himself; to see what our Lord looked like after He had risen from the dead.

The same thing happens now about the truths of faith. Men want, intellectually, to touch and to feel, to handle them mentally, and investigate them, and to see how everything is to be done, and what it will look like when it is done. Because faith will not gratify them in all this, they cry out that faith is against their reason, whereas, in reality, it is only baffling and disappointing to their imagination.

The virtue of faith, then, consists in an intellectual submission to the authority of God. You sometimes find people who think they can have faith without making this submission. It is not *really* that they submit to the faith, but they merely *agree* with it. The things that are proposed to them for belief are things that seem natural and reasonable to expect, or to which they are accustomed. They accept these things *not* because they come from a Supreme Authority, but because they happen to agree with their own views. This is not really faith at all, and this is shown the moment any truth happens to appear to them unsatisfactory or difficult. Then they refuse to accept it, and give up what they thought was their faith. In reality, they never had any faith to give up, because they never had made the submission, which is the very essence of faith.

The same kind of thing is sometimes found in a different form amongst those who really have faith. They really submit, but they do so in a grudging and unwilling manner. They deserve the reproach our Lord addresses to the Disciples on their way to Emmaus—they are "foolish and slow of heart to believe" (St. Luke xxiv. 25). They hold out against the duty of believing as long as possible, and consider it a hard thing that God has made known to them the "uncertain and hidden things of His wisdom." Men require certain dispositions of mind that they may receive the faith—and they must also take the proper means to preserve it. The Apostles said: "Lord, increase our faith" (St. Luke xvii. 5). If we do not pray and do not act up to our faith, we run the risk of losing it. It is the want of prayer and diligence that makes the great difficulty of faith. It is because men are so negligent in doing their duty by the faith, in exercising the *virtue* of faith, that our Lord says: "The Son of Man, when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth?" (St. Luke xviii. 8).

I have been speaking of the duty of *increasing* your faith, and

yet it is quite true, in another sense, that faith is a virtue that has no degrees. You either believe or disbelieve, and you cannot *half* have faith. Faith means accepting the "object" of faith, on the "motive" of faith. If you do not accept the whole of the object of faith, or do not receive it on the real motive of faith, you have no faith at all. The *object* of faith is what you have to believe, and the motive, the *reason* you have for believing it. There are a great number of truths proposed for your belief, but no one of these is the *object* of faith. The real object is the *whole* of God's revelation, including in it the authority by which He has been pleased to make it known to men. The object of faith, then, is the whole teaching of the Catholic Church. If you were knowingly to exclude any one article which was proposed for your belief, you would cease to have faith, because your object of faith would no longer be God's teaching, but a number of truths of your own selection. For this reason when we make an act of faith we generally mention in detail a number of great truths, but we always finish with some such expression as this: "Moreover, I believe whatsoever else the Catholic Church proposes to be believed." St. Paul says we are to have "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism" (Eph. iv. 5). We can have this "one faith" only by having one distinct and clear object of faith which we all accept. If each one believed just what for the moment appeared to him reasonable it is clear men could not have have one faith, and, indeed, could not have any faith at all, since following and adhering to your own views is nothing like the "obedience" and submission which is the very essence of the virtue of faith.

The "motive" of faith is the authority of God. You believe because God has spoken, and you know what truths you are to believe because you are convinced that God has given authority to His Church to teach you His revelation. If you believe on any other ground your belief is not faith at all. If, for instance, you accept any article of faith because it seems to present no difficulty to your reason or your imagination, it is not faith, but simple private opinion. It will easily and generally be the case that the truths taught seem natural and reasonable to you, but that must not be the *ground* of your belief in them. You must accept everything, easy or difficult, on the same ground "because God, who is the Sovereign Truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has revealed all these things to this His Church."

Faith is, then, as I have said, a gift and a virtue; but it has also another special quality. It is the foundation on which all virtues must be built up. In the natural order men can do many excellent things; but there can be no supernatural virtue without faith, since, as I before quoted, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

A *foundation*, however, implies that something is put upon it. If nothing is built upon a foundation it is almost, from the very idea of the thing, a useless structure. In the same way faith is insufficient for our salvation if no good structure is built upon it.

As I tried to show you before, faith with an evil life built upon it, gives a special character of malice to the evil. If you have a great faith and strongly realize all the truths faith teaches, and yet you continue to be rebellious, and perverse and ungrateful, your sin becomes all the more unpardonable from the very clearness of your faith. St. James says: "So faith also, if it hath not works, is dead in itself. But some men will say: Thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith without works, and I will show thee by works my faith. Thou believest that there is one God. Thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? For even as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (St. James ii. 17); and St. Paul, who was especially the apostle of faith—that is, who was obliged to insist very much on the excellence of faith, on account of the errors then prevailing—St. Paul says pretty much what St. James tells us in these words: "If I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing" (I. Cor. xiii. 2).

All this goes to show that faith must be used as a foundation on which to build a Christian life. Build up a superstructure of religion and piety and virtuous action, and faith is not only a great virtue in itself, but gives a special value to everything you do; but if you build evil and wickedness on your faith, or if you build nothing on it, then your very faith may become your condemnation.

I have now tried to give an account of the great virtue of faith, and perhaps dwelt rather too much at length on one or two points connected with it. I want, however, my dear brethren, to be a little more practical before I conclude.

You have all of you the faith. Some of you received it as children, and have had it all your lives, so that you may say with the Psalmist, "Thy testimonies have I taken for an heritage for ever" (Ps. cxviii. 111). Others, again, have been called into the fold of Christ by the special favour of God's Providence. It does not matter: in either case your faith is the gift of God. "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will" (Phil. ii. 13). It is a gift, and

the most precious and fruitful of all gifts—a "pearl of great price." Now, I want to ask you: Do you cherish and value and make much of this gift? Do you look upon it as a great thing that God has given you, or as a mere matter of course? Do you think of it as a treasure which has to be made to fructify—as a foundation on which a building has to be erected—or do you simply forget that such a gift requires something from you? For example: How often do you pray to God to keep up and foster by His grace the faith He has given, and to enable you to live worthy of it?

Again, you have the only faith which is *one*—that is, which really binds men together in one religion, because they all believe alike. Do you make this faith a bond which unites you in charity with all other Catholics? There are plenty of things which unite men together in this world—for example, nationality, sympathy, similarity of ideas, and so forth. Is there any one which *ought* to be such a strong bond of union as unity of faith? St. Paul tells us to "work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. vi. 10). And yet you find a good many people who have scarcely any sympathy for those of the "household of the faith." Does this look as if they appreciated their faith as they ought to do?

Your faith also is a virtue to be exercised. If you wished to be perfect in any other virtue—say humility or patience—you would understand that you must become so by practice. It is the same with faith. You practise it by frequently making "acts of faith." Such "acts of faith" are often made in the form of prayers, which we repeat every day, in which we express our faith in plain terms. These are excellent acts of faith, if you follow them diligently, and do not allow them to degenerate into mere empty words. Better acts of faith, however, are those which you make when a difficulty or a trial arises, or some temptation comes across your mind. There is generally much more earnestness and reality in such cases. The best of all acts of faith, however, are those which are not mere words. When the martyrs died for their faith, they made the most perfect act of faith possible to man. So, when you *do* something for your faith, you are making an act of it much more effectually than you could by words. If you bear a temporal loss or an affront or take some trouble for the sake of your faith, you are always doing a thing most pleasing to God. The Apostles "rejoiced to be found worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus"—(Acts v. 41)—and if you want to make your faith a virtue pleasing before God, you should have something, at any rate, of the same spirit. The notion of "virtue" implies something which is

practised with difficulty. If there were no trials there would be no virtue. This is true of faith as of all other virtues. There must be "trials of faith," there must be difficulties, things to be overcome, things that require great *trust* and confidence in God, "That the trial of your faith, much more precious than gold (which is tried by the fire), may be found unto praise and glory and honour at the appearance of Jesus Christ" (I. St. Peter i. 7).

Men are very apt to complain of such trials, and to wonder that they are ever called upon to accept anything like a difficulty; but where would be the virtue of faith if we were never told to believe anything which really *required* faith? If everything were perfectly easy and simple, how could St. John say: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith" (I. St. John v. 4)?

I said that our faith ought to be a worship of God, and, indeed, the highest kind of worship; but a great many people make it something very unlike worship. Some, for instance, are always criticizing what is proposed to them to believe, and try to ignore, as far as possible, the principle of authority, which is the very essence of faith. They would narrow down God's revelation, and make it agree with their own intellectual standard, and, in short, are always wishing, to use St. Paul's words, to be "more wise than it behoveth to be wise." This does not look much like the obedience of faith. Our Lord says: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 3). To be a true worship, your faith should be of this kind—that is, a generous and willing and joyful submission of your intellect to God's revelation the moment it is made known to you. You ought to encourage a readiness to believe—that is, not, of course, to believe without due warrant, but a readiness to welcome every divine teaching as a ray of divine light, without being over anxious to test everything by your own little lantern, the light of your understanding. St. Peter says: "We have the more firm prophetical word: whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts Understanding this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation" (II. St. Peter i. 19). This world must always be a dark place, and no light that we can bring to bear upon it by our own "private interpretation" can ever really throw light upon it. We ought, therefore, gladly to welcome every ray of light that may be given to us by revelation coming to us through the channels God has appointed.

Try, then, my dear brethren, to be "as little children" in your

obedience to faith, and then your faith will be a real worship of God, and you will be in the safe way to have "peace and joy in believing." I said before that we have all one faith. Every Catholic, good or bad, learned or ignorant, has precisely the same because we all have the same object of faith. In another sense, however, faith is very different with different individuals. Some have much more of the spirit of faith than others. For examples of this we have only to look into the lives of saints and holy people. You see that to them faith was the guiding principle of life. Everything they did was directed by motives of faith. The judgment they formed of every circumstance of human life was affected by the light thrown on it by faith; so that they reckoned things to be good or evil, loss or gain, according to the principles which faith put before them. In short, to them the whole of life received its colouring from their faith. This is what the Holy Scripture calls *living* by faith. "The just man liveth by faith" (Rom. i. 17). Every just man, then, not only has the faith, but in some degree or other *lives* by faith. The more thoroughly and completely he does so, the more claim has he to be considered a just man.

On the other hand, only too many are to be found who have the faith, but allow it to remain quite unfruitful in their minds so as to produce little or no effect on their conduct. To see their actions, to hear their talk, you would hardly fancy they had any faith at all.

If you want to make your faith produce fruit and be available for your salvation, my dear brethren, you must not be content to have and to keep the true faith, but you must try to make it a living faith. Meditate on the truths you believe, and apply them to the ordinary concerns of life. If you accustom yourself to make these truths the standard by which you judge of human affairs, it is clear that they will influence all you do, and so make all your actions pleasing to Almighty God.

In this way your faith will not only be, in itself, a great virtue and homage to God, but becomes also a foundation on which you have built up a grand edifice of holiness and a Christian life. Amen.

SERMON XXXVIII.

Confessing Christ.

"And I say to you, whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God. But he that shall deny Me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God" (St. Luke xii. 8).

IN these words, my dear brethren, our Lord utters a terrible threat. To be "denied before the angels of God" on that day when the just are to "look up and lift up their heads," because their redemption is at hand! The sign of the Son of Man shall appear in heaven, and the Son of Man shall come in the "clouds of heaven with much power and majesty;" and "every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him" (Apoc. i. 7).

How fearful it will be for those to whom He looks stern and cold; for those whom He denies as cowards and traitors; to whom He says: "I never knew you; depart from Me!"

Who could bear the shame and disgrace of such a painful rejection? And yet it will be the portion of those who deny our Lord before men. The duty of confessing our Lord, and the sin of denying Him, will be the subject of my sermon to-day.

We are bound to accept the revelation of God with an inward faith; but this inward faith must lead to outward profession, or it will not avail. You cannot really serve God in your heart without carrying that service into external life. St. Paul says, "With the heart we believe unto justice: but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10).

Man is body and soul; and body and soul must work together, or else what they do goes for very little. It is a mockery to say you *feel* if you don't *do*. If your actions do not correspond with your feelings, then your feelings, are generally only a delusion and a sham. They may deceive you, and make you think yourself a great deal better than you are; but they will not count for much with Almighty God. If your heart and your tongue and your hands do not go together in your religion you have reason to fear that your religion is a hypocrisy, an untruthfulness, and an abomination before the Lord.

It is necessary to say this, in very plain language, because

people sometimes delude themselves by saying, "My heart is good," whereas their actions are certainly *not* good. If a man does not *try*, at any rate, to make his actions and his words good, his heart certainly is *not* good. This is plainly shown by the words I have quoted. Our Lord is not content with the heart; He requires the confession of the life. "He that will *confess* Me before men."

We will now consider how we are to confess Christ. In the first place, it is not necessary always to be putting forward your faith. You will find people who will talk about their religion on all occasions and in all companies, and seem perpetually trying to force it upon others. This is not very desirable, especially if it leads you into talking in a violent and boastful way. On such occasions we are apt to say bitter and unkind things, which do a great deal more harm than good. It is certainly a good thing not to be influenced by human respect; but it is also good to be considerate to others, and, if possible, not to make your faith and the practice of your religion an offence and burden to your neighbours. When you do so you will generally find that there is a good deal of vanity and self-will in your conduct. You need not, then, be always talking about your religion; but when you are asked by those who have a right to ask you, you are bound to confess your faith. If you *deny* it when questioned you are clearly denying our Lord. This is not quite enough because there are many cases in which keeping silence is *equivalent* to a denial. Whenever this is the case it is a plain duty to confess your faith.

Besides this explicit confession, there is another and very important way of confessing your faith. This is by doing those outward acts to which Christians are bound. When you are regular and diligent in performing the external duties of religion, in spite of difficulties, you are confessing Christ before men. If, for instance, you hear Mass on Sundays, notwithstanding small inconveniences, such as bad weather and bad roads, the trouble you take is a confession of your faith. You have heard, I dare say, of poor Catholics in Ireland who are in the habit of walking many miles to church, and are content to hear Mass, perhaps, out in the rain—is not this a grand confession of faith? So with other duties. You observe the days of fasting and abstinence the Church has appointed, and do not shrink from the annoyance it may cause you, and are not afraid of being laughed at; by doing these things you often make a practical profession of faith, which has more merit than mere words.

Again, there are many little Catholic practices which are not only good as means of devotion, but are likewise a kind of con-

fession of faith. The sign of the cross, the habit of wearing the crucifix and blessed medals, and having such things in your houses, are all indications of that readiness to confess the faith boldly which is so pleasing to God.

I now come to speak of the sin of denying our Lord. In proportion as it is praiseworthy and meritorious to confess the Lord, so is it a terrible thing to deny Him. It is, however, a thing to which in one shape or other, we are often tempted in this life. The most obvious way in which this may be done is by a direct and explicit denial. It was in this way St. Peter denied our Lord. He found himself in the company of our Lord's enemies and he said, "I know not the Man." It was for this that he "went out and wept bitterly," and for which, we are told, that he mourned bitterly all the days of his life. It does not matter in what *manner* this denial is made. Sometimes it is by things, which, in themselves, seem trifling.

In the early persecutions, when people were suspected of being Christians, all that they were asked to do generally was to throw a few grains of incense on to the fire. This was by way of offering sacrifice to some idol. It was, as peo[illegible]le would explain to them, merely a legal ceremony to satisfy what the law required. No one asked them really to *believe* in the idol—it was a mere form. Sometimes they were not asked even to do this, they had only to sign a paper saying that they had done so. What a trifling thing this seemed! The idol itself was nothing, and no worship of it was intended. Still, the action was meant as an explicit and distinct denial of the faith, and, therefore, to do it was a grievous sin. Thousands of martyrs suffered unheard-of torments and died, rather than do this action which, at first sight, appeared so insignificant. The same thing was seen in our own country. A law was made requiring Catholics to attend the Protestant service. If they would not do so they were called recusants, and they had to pay very heavy fines, by which they were almost ruined, for refusing to attend. They might have said: "After all, what is the objection to being present at a Protestant service? We don't intend to give up our own faith, and we do not mean to join in any strange worship. What harm can our mere presence in the church do?" They could not, however, consent to be present, because it was a thing distinctly asked of them as a denial of their faith. It was their duty to sacrifice everything in this world—as they did—rather than do what was really denying Christ.

It is a grievous sin therefore to do *anything*, however small it may appear to be, which is required of you as a denial of your faith. It sometimes seems a hard thing, to poor people espe-

cially. A good situation offers itself—a good means of gaining a livelihood; and all that is wanted is some little word or deed by which they are to deny their faith. How trifling the thing asked appears sometimes, and how great the good to be gained! It is just in this way that men are ensnared to their destruction. If they gain all the world by denying Christ they will one day find that they have made a terrible exchange.

But there are other ways of denying the faith. You may deny your faith by unlawful concealment. If you hide your faith for the sake of gain, or for convenience, or out of human respect, you are often indirectly denying your religion. Servants are sometimes tempted to do this to get into good places. They have to live and behave as Protestants, and keep silence about their faith. Whatever may be said against it, they are not to venture one word in its behalf, but have to listen to every insult in silence. An ignominious silence like this is very much like a denial. Again, a man goes into company, and carefully conceals his religion, because he is afraid his comrades will laugh at him. He hears the truths of faith and holy things, which in his heart he reverences, ridiculed and reviled; and yet he has put himself into a position which makes it impossible to say a word. He has to laugh at jokes which make him shudder, and almost to take a part in them. How can any Catholic be willing to expose himself to this? In cases of great difficulty, indeed, it is sometimes lawful to conceal your religion, so long as you do not directly *deny* it—but it is always dangerous, and should be avoided if possible.

There is another very common temptation of the same kind. People are very often tempted to omit serious duties out of human respect—that is, for fear of what men will say about them. If you go amongst Protestants on a Friday, and you do not observe abstinence for fear that they should laugh at you—what is this but denying your faith? People sometimes say, "I was afraid of making people stare at me, and I thought I should be laughed at if I didn't eat meat like the rest!" and they think that this is a kind of excuse for breaking the commandment of the Church. In reality, a motive of this sort only adds to their disobedience—something very like a denial of their faith. They are afraid of men rather than of God, and commit sin that men may not laugh at them. The same applies to all other duties—to hearing Mass, to going to the Sacraments, and all other things which are matters of obligation.

I now come to a point which requires a little explanation. Any joining in religious worship with those who are out of the Catholic Church is forbidden. You may not enter a Pro-

testant church to take part in the service, and may not join in prayer with Protestants even privately.

This is sometimes a great inconvenience, and looks very harsh and unkind. Servants going into Protestant places often find it very hard to refuse to join in prayer. People say, "Why should you refuse? Do you think us so wicked that you can't join us, or are our prayers so bad that you can't listen to them?" Nothing can be farther from our thoughts. The Protestants who ask us to join in prayer with them may be very excellent people, and in perfectly good faith. They have, however, unfortunately, taken up a position of religious hostility to the true Church. We may hope and believe that it is no fault of their own that caused them to do so; but that is their position. They are "Protestants;"—protesting against what? Against the one true Catholic Church of Christ, of which we glory to be members. How can we join with them without taking part in the attack which tacitly they are making on the Church? "He who is not with Me is against Me," says our Lord; and he who is not with the Church of Christ is against it. What right has a Catholic to be found under false colours? Is he not as much a traitor as if a soldier were found in the uniform of the enemy? The Protestants who ask us to join with them may perhaps be able to plead before the tribunal of Christ that they did not know the true Church of Christ; and, therefore, they protested and set up a worship of God apart from, and at variance with, that which He had established upon earth. But will that plea avail us? No. If Catholics join in any worship alien to that of the true Church, they do so as traitors, and cannot be excused.

I have spoken now of the duty of confessing the faith at proper times, and about the sin of denying our Lord, either directly or indirectly. I must add a few words about the general fault of being *ashamed* of the faith. There are a great many people who would certainly confess their faith if they were fairly put to it and couldn't find a way of escape, and yet often seemed to be ashamed of it. Surely, the next thing to denying our Lord is to be ashamed of Him. St. Paul says: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi. 14). How different is the feeling of those who are ashamed of their religion, even in little things! Nothing can be more injurious to our Lord. How would men like it themselves? If you had a friend, and discovered that, although your friend was very intimate and affectionate to you in private, he was ashamed to be seen with you in public? If your friend tried hard not to let it be known that he knew you by sight, and

endeavoured to avoid meeting you in any public place, I don't think you would value his friendship very much—indeed, I am not sure that you would not think he insulted you by calling himself your friend. There are a good many people, however, who treat our Lord and His faith it this way. They don't wish it to be known of what religion they are ; if it is known, they try to make the least of it they can, to make its doctrines mean as little as possible, and to go as far as possible in giving up to opponents. Such people have generally a word or two of apology, or perhaps of condemnation, for their own faith, and sometimes a little compliment to pay to those out of the Church. Many imagine that this kind of behaviour is a mark of impartiality. They give themselves credit for great fairness to their opponents—great liberality, as people call it—and absence of all bigotry. I am afraid, however, it is because they are ashamed of their faith, and care more about getting the favour of men than about making a good confession before God.

Now, we are in great danger of denying Christ in these days —as, indeed, men have been in all days. If in the old times, when the world was rougher and more cruel, it required great courage for men to allow themselves "to be brought before governors and Kings" for Jesus' sake, as the Apostles were, it requires great wariness, and courage, too, in our times—though, perhaps, courage of a different sort. Things seem so plausible, and temptations come in an easy and common-place way, so that there is none of the heroism of a grand resistance to downright persecution, and for this reason they are more dangerous.

We can only guard ourselves against such dangers by having firm and fixed principles. The first of these is that loyalty to the Catholic Church means loyalty to God. We cannot separate the two things. We are faithful to the Church only because it is the channel of God's revelation, and the means by which His will is made known. Our Lord founded His Church to communicate to men the graces purchased by His Precious Blood, and St. Paul tells us that "Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it; cleansing it by the laver of water in the Word of Life, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25). For this reason He said, "I am with you all days to the end of the world ;" and "he that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me." It is impossible, therefore, to be unfaithful to the Church, to prevaricate its doctrines, or to deny it before men, without at the same time denying our Lord.

Secondly, we must have it for a principle that it does not matter in what *shape* the denial comes. It may present itself to us in the way that seems least important. Whatever is *really* a denial of our faith becomes necessarily a matter of the greatest importance, and we have to be on our guard against things that seem to be trivial, when they are perhaps meant to make us deny the faith.

Besides this, we have to consider that if we want to be brave in great things we must begin by being brave in little things. People often flatter themselves that they would be faithful in a great trial, although they are apt to be cowardly in small ones. Is this likely? If you give way to human respect in little things, where your conscience tells you that you ought to make a stand, you are making it much harder to resist next time. If you were ashamed of your faith yesterday, and yielded little things out of the fear of men, the world will expect you to yield in greater ones to-day, and soon will consider you quite at its mercy. It is always much easier to make a firm stand at the beginning—the moment you are sure that it is a matter of conscience, and not merely self-will. If you do so, very likely your first contest will be your last, and you will afterwards have no difficulty in boldly confessing your faith on all proper occasions.

This is just one of the principles that parents ought to instil into their children. The children should be taught that their first duty is not only to believe, but to stand up bravely for their faith, without caring for what men think or say.

If ever you are tempted to deny the faith in any shape—and this may happen to any of us any day—you should bring before your mind the "good confession" which our Lord made before Pontius Pilate. Fancy Jesus standing before Pilate's judgment seat, with His hands bound and His crown of thorns on His head. You can see the world's power represented by the stern soldiers who surround the Governor's tribunal, and by the cross and the nails which are being got ready for our Saviour. You can hear the voice of the world, represented by the shouts of the Jewish rabble, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" "Away with Him; away with Him; crucify Him; crucify Him!" and "If thou release this Man thou art not Cæsar's friend!" Fancy all this, and then listen to our Lord's calm words, "For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony of the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth My voice" (St. John xviii. 37); or, again, His words, "You shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (St. Mark xiv. 62). How shall we be able to meet Him when He comes in power and majesty if we

are now afraid to bear witness to Him and to His law, as He once bore witness to the truth for us?

If we could only think of this when we are tempted to deny our Lord we should care very little for what men could say to us, and be ready, as St. Paul tells us, "to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach, for we have not here a lasting city, but seek one that is to come" (Heb. xiii. 13).

But it is not as if we alone had to do this. If we have occasionally to suffer reproach, and even persecution, for confessing the name of Christ, we must remember that we are but sharing the lot of the saints. St. Peter says: "Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you; but if you partake the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (I. St. Peter iv. 12); and, again, "Resist, ye strong in faith, knowing that the same affliction befalls your brethren who are in the world" (I. St. Peter v. 9).

We have before us a multitude of examples. From the days of the Apostles until now, in every generation, there have been thousands who have confessed the name of Christ before Kings and rulers of the earth, and been ready to die rather than deny Him. We have the glorious army of martyrs for our model. St. Stephen, the martyr who first sealed his faith with his blood, made confession before the council of the Jews, and for his reward "saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God," and "fell asleep in the Lord."

Since then thousands of every age have done the same—old men and timid girls, and even little children, have been found brave enough, by God's grace, to make this same confession at the cost of their lives. St. Polycarp, the holy Bishop of Smyrna, was brought before the Roman Pro-Consul, and commanded to swear by the genius of Cæsar, and to blaspheme Christ, that he might be liberated. Hear what Polycarp says in reply: "I have served Him these fourscore and six years, and He never did me any harm, but much good; and how can I blaspheme my King and Saviour? If you require of me to swear by the genius of Cæsar, as you call it, hear my free confession: I am a Christian." When the Pro-Consul threatened him with wild beasts he said: "Call for them; for we are unalterably resolved not to change from good to evil." The Pro-Consul said: "If you contemn the beasts I will cause you to be burnt to ashes." Polycarp answered: "You threaten me with a fire which burns for a short time and then goes out; but are yourself ignorant of the judgment to come, and of the fire of everlasting torments

which is prepared for the wicked." This was the way in which a Bishop at the age of eighty-six confessed Christ; but we find just the same courage and constancy in young and delicate women. St. Agnes, at the age of thirteen, to all the persuasions and threats of the judge, only answered that she could have no other spouse than Jesus Christ. They made terrible fires, and showed her cruel instruments of torture; but she looked at them all with cheerful composure. She was dragged before idols and commanded to offer incense, but "could by no means be compelled to move her hand except to make the sign of the cross."

What these saints did thousands of others did of all ages and classes. And now, my brethren, we should ask ourselves: "Will not God expect *something* of this spirit from us also? Can we be Christians if we, too, are not prepared to do something and suffer something for the name of Christ?"

Our confession is to be made before men, but not before men only. What we do is done before Almighty God and His angels, and in presence of that glorious army of martyrs who have fought the good fight before us. "I saw under the altar the souls of those that were slain for the word of God, and they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O God! holy and true, dost Thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?' And white robes were given to them, and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little time till their fellow-servants and their brethren who are to be slain even as they should be filled up" (Apoc. vi. 9).

With this glorious crowd of saints looking on at our contest, full of sympathy, and constantly raising their voices to God for us, my dear brethren, we never need fear, but should be at all times ready to make that good confession here on earth which is necessary that one day we may join them in heaven. Amen.

SERMON XXXIX.

Sins Against Faith.

"Having faith and a good conscience, which some rejecting have made shipwreck concerning the faith" (I. Tim. i. 19).

I HAVE been speaking at some length about the excellence and necessity of faith, and I have also dwelt upon the importance of bravely confessing Christ. All that remains for me now to do is to speak of certain particular faults which people commit against their faith. Amongst the offences against the First Commandment, the Catechism mentions "sins of doubt, and also culpable ignorance of the doctrines of the Church."

You must first remember that a *wilful* doubt of any article of the faith is a great sin. When you consent to doubt, you really disbelieve, and disbelief of *one* thing — logically, at any rate — means disbelief of everything. The very idea of faith is *trust* and *certainty*. "I firmly believe" is what you constantly say; and it is clear that if you are really trusting to God's word, and relying upon Him, you cannot be uncertain. "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind; therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (St. James i. 6).

When a person wilfully doubts he has made up his mind no longer to *trust* Almighty God, and is therefore guilty of a mental act which is inconsistent with faith.

There are, however, a great many things which look like doubt, but are really very different. Such things are temptations, but are not necessarily sins at all. You may often have difficulties and perplexities about faith. You cannot understand how such a thing can possibly be, or why it is; some things seem to you very hard and unintelligible; sometimes it appears difficult to make one truth agree in your own mind with another. How, for instance, can we reconcile the freedom of our own wills with the infinite fore-knowledge of God? How can we understand all the wonderful things presented to us in the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Holy Eucharist? Again, how wonderful are the dealings of God's providence in all around us! The varied course of human life and human history—the mass of evil and sin we see in the world—the scandals that arise from time to time—the success of the wicked—all these things, and

numberless others are bewildering to us. Why do these things happen? We cannot tell. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord or, who hath been his counsellor?"

All these things are *difficulties*, which people feel more or less acutely, according to their particular temperaments and according to circumstances. These are the very things that require *trust* in God; and your trust in God is not necessarily lessened because you feel the difficulties. If there were no such difficulties there would be no need of that trust and confidence in God's word which is the very essence of faith.

Besides perplexities of this kind, we are all liable to fits of despondency. At such times everything looks black, and seems to have gone wrong. What appeared bright and hopeful yesterday, to-day seems involved in the deepest gloom. At such times people even feel as if they had lost sight altogether of the supernatural, and cared for nothing. It is only a feeling; they have not really lost either sight or care, and a very small thing will often bring them back to their habitual state of mind. Fits of despondency very often take the shape of temptations against faith, and are dangerous if not met in the proper way.

You must remember that these varying states of mind are, after all, the nature of man—"he fleeth like a shadow, and never continueth in the same state" (Job xiv. 2). They are the effects of physical causes—bad health, weariness, or accident may bring them on. They are like a dull, cloudy day, on which no sun is to be seen, and everything looks black. You know that all this will pass off in due time if you only have patience to wait. So it is with mental perplexities and despondencies. "In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one" (Eph. vi. 16). What are these fiery darts of which the Apostle speaks? Are they not the very perplexities and despondencies of which we have been speaking—which can only be extinguished by *faith*—that is, by a profound and constant *trust* in God's word?

Temptations of this kind, as I have said, must be looked for, since they belong to the natural condition of man on earth, and must be resisted just like any other temptation. The remedies against them are humility, prayer, and patience. "Be subject to the Lord, and pray to Him" (Ps. xxxvi. 7). Those who are very humble easily escape from temptation. If we have a low idea of ourselves as compared with Almighty God, and properly realize that we are but dust and ashes in the presence of our Creator, and that the "wisdom of the world is foolishness with God"—then it will be easy to accept things which are beyond our comprehension. It will not, then, seem strange that God's

ways should pass our understanding. Again, if we felt, as we ought to do, that faith is God's gift, we should never fail in immediate recourse to Him when difficulties arise. He who gave our faith can alone defend it. The Gospel furnishes us with many examples of what we should do in such difficulties. "And immediately the father of the boy, crying out with tears, said, I do believe; Lord, help my unbelief" (St. Mark ix. 23). Here you have a specimen of the humility and prayerfulness by which to overcome temptation. Again, hear what St. Peter said when a difficulty was presented to him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (St. John vi. 69). This is the answer to all perplexities—"to whom shall we go?"—where else derive any light in the darkness that surrounds us on earth, except from Him whom has "the words of eternal life"?

We must add patience to our prayer. Half our difficulties arise from the want of it. "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"—that was what the Apostles asked our Lord. We, too, want to know *when* God is going to do this thing or that. He is "patient because He is eternal." "The Lord is a patient rewarder" (Ecclus. v. 4). We want to hurry things, forgetting that "one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II. St. Peter iii. 8).

These are the virtues by which Christians should defend themselves if attacked by temptations against faith, but they must also take care that such temptations are not brought on by their own fault.

When people make shipwreck of their faith, it is generally because they themselves have prepared the way for temptation. Sometimes, for instance, a man has indulged in an irreverent and rebellious tone of mind. He, perhaps, gives way too much to his own fancies—to his likes and dislikes—and so becomes over critical, and, perhaps, supercilious and intractable. It is not likely that any one can go on in this way very long without great danger. A slight temptation is sufficient to lead any one who is discontented and disloyal into open rebellion, just as a comparatively slight disease will carry off a person who is already in a bad state of health.

Dangerous temptations often arise, also, from the heedlessness with which people put themselves into occasions of danger, without any necessity. In these temptations, as in all others, it frequently happens that those who "love the danger will perish in it." We have to preserve the faith by a spirit of humility. St. Paul says: "Thou standest by faith; be not

high-minded, but fear;" and again, "For I say, by the grace that is given to me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety" (Rom. xi. 20—xii. 3).

A want of the "sobriety" of mind of which the Apostle speaks is a serious danger to Christians. They are "high-minded" and want to be "more wise than it behoveth to be wise," and therefore expose themselves to all sorts of unnecessary temptations out of mere curiosity and wilfulness, or because they are over confident in their own strength. We cannot wonder that such temptations are often fatal, and that people sometimes "make shipwreck concerning the faith" under these circumstances. The very spirit which leads them into danger renders them powerless to resist it.

Humility and the "fear" which the Apostle enjoins upon us ought certainly to keep us from unnecessary dangers. Those who disregard danger, do so either because they do not value the things which they are exposing to peril, or because they have an exaggerated idea of their own strength. We cannot expect that God will grant special graces to people with these dispositions to save them from the peril they have sought.

The most frequent cause, however, of temptations against faith is an indifferent and sinful life. If a man has been leading a careless life and doing all that his faith told him *not* to do, he has plainly been preparing temptation for himself. What good has his faith been to him? What has he to show in return for the great grace given to him?

Let us remember, my dear brethren, the lesson which our Lord gives us in the parable of the talents. The master says to the wicked servant, who had hidden his talent in the earth, "Thou oughtest to have committed my money to the bankers, and, at my coming, I should have received my own, with usury. *Take ye away*, therefore, the talent from him . . . . from him that hath *not*, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away" (St. Matt. xxv. 27).

Is not this often the explanation of people losing their faith? Is it not because God has withdrawn His grace from those who did not make any good use of it?

I must now speak of some of the things which are special dangers at the present day.

The first of these dangers undoubtedly is *ignorance of religion.* It is possible, perhaps, to keep the faith with very little knowledge in some countries, and under some circumstances—but certainly not here in England. You are likely almost every day to hear arguments and difficulties and plenty of false state-

ments and slanders against your religion. How can you possibly defend yourselves if you know nothing about the questions that arise? The Apostle tells us that we ought to be able to "give an account of the faith that is in us;" and if you have not a word to say, it is not only rather a scandal to others, but may be disastrous to your own faith.

In spite of this, it is strange to see the small amount of pains which people take to learn their religion—or to teach it to their children. Perhaps it is that they think such knowledge will come by instinct. You will often find neglect of this sort not only amongst the poor, but amongst rich and highly-educated people. You see some parents who are most anxious about the education of their children—they would have them learn everything under the sun—arts and sciences, languages without number, and all the accomplishments that money can procure—and yet these same parents will leave their children with a very imperfect and superficial knowledge of their faith. The reason is obvious: they have given less time and trouble to religious instruction than to the most insignificant branch of worldly education.

The knowledge of your religion, my dear brethren, will *not* come of itself either to yourselves or your children. St. Paul says: "Faith, then, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. x. 17). It is a great duty to learn your faith properly, and a sin not to know it.

There are, of course, several sorts of ignorance, which differ very much in importance. Some truths are necessary for us as the very means of saving our souls. You must know the great truths of religion if you are to get to heaven. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him" (Heb. xi. 6). If you do not know these truths you are not in a state to receive any of the sacraments, or make use of any other means of grace. It is clear also that you must know the nature of the sacraments you have to receive. If you are not sufficiently instructed to be able to make proper use of the appointed sources of grace, you are, in some degree, cut off from the means of salvation. It is plain that ignorance of these is the greatest of all faults, if it is wilful or careless ignorance, and that it is the greatest of all misfortunes if it is unavoidable. Again, there are other things which every one is bound to know by God's command—so that it is a grievous sin to be ignorant of them, even when they are not actually necessary as means of salvation.

For example, every one is bound to know the things commanded for God's worship—that is, to understand in what

manner he is to worship God. If he does not take the trouble to be properly instructed in his duty to God he is plainly guilty of a great sin. Besides this, every one is bound to understand the duties of his own state of life. If you are in a condition of life to which important duties are attached, and you do not take any trouble to learn what these duties are, and how they are to be performed, it is clear that you are living in sin.

Besides these cases in which ignorance is distinctly sinful, it is clear that an imperfect, inaccurate knowledge—a knowledge not in proportion to your knowledge of other things, that is, to your general education—must always be more or less sinful, and must constantly place you in situations of great danger to your soul.

It may be well to consider for a moment the sort of religious knowledge which Christians generally ought to have.

It is clear every one ought to know the Catechism. People sometimes think this is merely meant for children; but in reality it is taught to children that they may have in their minds accurate forms of words which they will be able to understand as they grow older. If you forget the Catechism when you grow up, and never think of the meaning of it, what is the use of having learned it? As you advance in life you can understand it much better than you could when you were young if you will only think about it. Besides this, you ought to learn accurately the grounds of faith, so as to understand not only what you believe, but your *reason* for believing it. If you have not some intellectual hold of the faith, you are at the mercy of the first person who chooses to put difficulties; and it is always an easy thing to make objections. You sometimes find Catholics, for instance, who have a very imperfect idea of the principles of the Church's authority. When this is the case it is not wonderful if a trifling difficulty or a small objection disturb them. St. Paul tells us that the Church is the "pillar and ground of truth" (I. Tim. iii. 15); and the "testimony, teaching, and authority" of the Church are the guide of our faith. Those who do not properly understand the authority on which their faith rests, and which is the key to all difficulties, must naturally find it hard to meet objections. Besides the grounds of faith, we all ought to know and to study the *principles* and *maxims* of the Gospel. The Christian faith has its own principles and maxims, which are very different to those of the world. You cannot be a good Christian without being acquainted with these maxims.

You ought also to be familiar with the life of our Lord. The very meaning of Christian is "follower of Christ"—that is, one who imitates the example of Christ. St. Paul says: "For I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus

Christ and Him crucified" (I. Cor. ii. 2). What sort of a Christian would you call a man who knew little or nothing of the history of our Lord, of His Words and His deeds, or of His sufferings?

The Church grants a great many indulgences to such devotions as the Rosary and the Stations, because these devotions lead people to study the life of our Lord. The Rosary is a series of meditations on the different events in the life and death of our Saviour. It is divided into three parts—the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries. In these three sets of meditations we go through the whole of our Lord's life—His early life, His Passion, and, finally, in the Glorious Mysteries, His resurrection and ascension. This course of meditation is made twice every week by those who habitually recite the Rosary. The Stations take us in a more detailed and minute manner through the principal part of our Lord's Passion. It is plain that the Church urges us to these devotions in order that we may know Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

All these different branches of religious knowledge require, first, to be carefully learned, and then diligently kept up. The Gospel says: "But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart" (St. Luke ii. 19). It is necessary for us, also, to learn the truths of religion, and then through life to "ponder on them in our hearts."

I must now speak of the danger to faith from bad company, dangerous employments, and irreligious books. We cannot expect to go through life without meeting dangerous occasions of this sort, and we ought not to be afraid of them when they are unavoidable. It is quite a different thing, however, when people seek out occasions and are fond of exposing themselves to them. Take the example of St. Peter. He went into the company of our Lord's enemies without the slightest necessity: "And with them was Peter also standing and warming himself" (St. John xviii. 18). And the consequence was that he denied Christ. The *next* time that he came before the enemy was when they "laid hands upon him, and dragged him before the tribunal of the chief priests." *Then* he answered: "We ought to obey God rather than men," and when the Apostles had been scourged and charged not to speak at all in the name of Jesus, "they went away from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts v. 29–41). Nothing can show us more clearly the difference between dangers which it is our duty to face, and dangers which are of our own seeking.

You cannot keep the company of irreligious people, and be

fond of their society, without running into great danger to your faith. The very tone of mind which takes you *unnecessarily* into such company is in itself a danger. There is a fine show of being "liberal," and not "bigoted," in all this, which is a great attraction to many people, but common sense and experience point out the danger. Any one who habitually puts himself into such occasions runs very great risk of losing his faith.

The same applies quite as strongly to reading dangerous books. At the present day you will come across a gread deal of irreligious and even infidel literature. If you read books of this class without any reasonable ground—just out of curiosity and for amusement—they are certain to become dangerous temptations against faith. Such books *ought* to be offensive and disagreeable to you; and, if not, they are sure to be dangerous.

If your profession or position in life obliges you to study works of this kind you need not be afraid of them. Brace yourself up to encounter the danger in the spirit of faith, and you may rely upon it that God will give you grace to resist any temptation that may arise; but do not seek such dangers unnecessarily.

Another way in which people sin against their faith is by entering upon dangerous employments without any real necessity. If, for example, you take a situation which you know will perpetually bring you into contact with irreligious people, and at the same time prevent you from attending properly to your religious duties, you can hardly hope that your faith will not suffer. You sometimes find people who will take a house in a place where they cannot hear Mass on Sundays, and can scarcely ever approach the Sacraments. They do this, perhaps, to save a little money, or to get some small worldly advantage, and they hardly take the trouble to think of the great danger in which they are placing themselves.

Is it to be expected that Almighty God will give them special graces to preserve the faith when they seem to care so little about it themselves?

It is still worse and more lamentable when people act in this way by their children. It is, of course, a great object for parents to get their children well placed out in the world; but, in doing so, they must not lose sight of the most important of all considerations—their religious welfare.

If, for a little extra gain, you place your children in situations where it will be almost impossible for them to practise their religion—in places where, perhaps, they will hear their faith scoffed at and themselves ridiculed for attending to their duties

—how will you answer for it before God? If your children lose their faith it will be their loss and misfortune; but you, too, will have to account for it at the day of judgment.

I have now mentioned some of the special dangers against faith, which, as Christians, you are bound to avoid. These are, as I have said, ignorance of your religion and dangerous occasions —that is, dangerous company, dangerous books and employments, which prevent you from giving proper attention to the practice of your religion. It is by such things as these commonly that men "make shipwreck" of their faith.

There is another and still more common danger, to which I alluded before. Those who fall away from the faith almost always prepare the way by a careless life. If a man lives in habitual disregard of all that his faith teaches, it is not very wonderful that he soon loses his faith. He is living, perhaps, in mortal sin, and keeps on hardening his heart against God. By-and-bye he begins to lose sight of God altogether—that is to say, God has withdrawn from him, and left him to himself. "Forty years was I offended with that generation, and I said: These always err in heart, and these men have not known my ways: so I swore in my wrath that they shall not enter into my rest" (Ps. xciv. 10).

That is what Almighty God said of the Jews, and it is what He says of many Christians. After a time they reach the appointed limit of God's forbearance, and then He "lets them go according to the desires of their heart" (Ps. lxxx. 13).

The first idea of the faith is that of the presence of God, and of our responsibility to Him. We cannot go on very long ignoring this responsibility, and paying no attention to God's presence, without at least ceasing to believe it. This is the way in which men generally lose the faith. They have prepared for a fall by neglect and disobedience and dangerous occasions, and, should it come, they have only themselves to thank for it.

On the other hand, if we want to strengthen our faith, and to prepare to meet the dangers we may have to encounter, we ought to cultivate the sense of God's presence. "Walk before Me and be perfect." These were God's words to Abraham. We "walk before God" by remembering His presence. If you are in the habit of every day entering God's presence by meditation, you need not fear any danger. The few minutes you spend face to face with Almighty God, by which you renew your sense of His presence, and of your responsibility to Him, are a sovereign remedy against all kinds of temptations, and specially against the trials to which your faith may be exposed during the day.

And now to conclude, my dear brethren. Your faith is the

best of all God's good gifts to you. It is a gift purchased for you by the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a gift designed to give "joy and peace" here on earth, and to conduct you to everlasting rest. Such a gift needs to be taken care of, and it is your first duty to take care of it.

You can only do this by diligently keeping up the grace within you. "Neglect not the grace that is in thee" (I. Tim. iv. 14). This was St. Paul's admonition to St. Timothy, and it applies to all Christians. Keep in the grace of God, and walk before Him, and you need not be afraid of losing the faith. On the other hand, if you disregard this precious gift which has been bestowed on you, it may be taken away from you, and then you will be without excuse before God. Something may, perhaps, be said for those who have had no opportuity of knowing the faith; but what shall be said of those who received it and lost it by their own fault? "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice than, after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment, which was delivered to them" (II. St. Peter ii. 21).

SERMON XL.

Superstition.

"Is there not a God in Israel, that ye go to consult Beelzebub the god of Accaron?" (IV. Kings i. 3).

THERE are several other sins against the First Commandment which require special attention. The Catechism mentions one class of sins in this way: "All dealing with the devil, and superstitious practices, such as consulting spiritualists and fortune-tellers, and trusting to charms, omens, dreams, and such like fooleries."

In the first place, dealing with the devil. It is clear that any kind of wilful and direct dealing with the devil is always a grievous sin. To make any sort of compact or agreement with God's enemy, by which you are to get assistance from him, is plainly a treason against God.

It is, indeed, worshipping the devil instead of God, or, at least, trying to unite the worship of God with the worship of the devil. We cannot join these two services together, and it is treason to attempt it. It was the actual or implied devil-worship which made the great abomination of idolatry. The Psalmist tells us that: "All the gods of the Gentiles are devils" (Ps. xcv. 5); and St. Paul says: "What fellowship hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial . . . and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" (II. Cor. vi. 14); and in another place he says: "The things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God. You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils, and you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils" (I. Cor. x. 20). It was by trying to join these two worships that the Philistines brought down upon themselves the anger of God. "And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it into the Temple of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. And when the Azotians arose early next day, behold! Dagon lay upon the ground before the ark of the Lord: and they took Dagon, and set him again in his place. And the next day, again when they rose in the morning, they found Dagon lying upon his face upon the earth before the ark of the Lord, and the head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold . . . . and the hand of the Lord was heavy upon the Azotians, and He destroyed them" (I. Kings v. 1). To

worship the devil, therefore, or to make any compact with him, is to renounce Christ, and as such has always been forbidden as one of the greatest of sins.

There is little fear of your ever being tempted to any direct worship of the devil; but there is an *indirect* worship of which it is necessary to speak. This indirect kind of worship consists in the efforts people sometimes make to obtain forbidden knowledge.

Men often have a foolish craving to know the future, or to find out hidden things, which they cannot know by any natural means. To gratify this craving they consult fortune-tellers, or go to spiritualists, or try some other plan to get supernatural knowledge. Now, if you think of it, it is plain that this is an indirect worship of the devil. You do not *mean* to have any dealings with the devil, true; but you *do* mean to get knowledge, or something else you may want, from some power *beside* Almighty God. The good you hope to obtain certainly does not come in the order of nature. You are not using any *natural* means of knowledge, that is plain. Moreover, the good does not even profess to come to you from Almighty God. What can it come from, then? It is obvious that if you get good at all you are getting it from the enemy of God, or, at any rate, from some other power than God, and in defiance of Him. What is this but offering a worship to some demon?

Generally speaking, when people do this sort of thing—that is, when they consult fortune-tellers, or try to find out what is going to happen to them by cutting cards, or in some other foolish way—when they do all this, they have no idea of consulting the devil or paying homage to him. They would not do so for any consideration. Such things are generally done out of levity, and without any thought, and perhaps more in joke than with any serious purpose. There is always, however, something wrong and sinful about them, and they often enough lead to disastrous results. A person goes to a fortune-teller and hears something, true or false, about the future, which Almighty God never meant him to learn. He certainly has not got any real light to guide his conduct; but very likely he has heard something which may make him miserable all his days. Perhaps God sometimes allows the evil foretold to come true, as a punishment; perhaps the very fact of always looking out for a misfortune has brought it about—however that may be, it often happens that the evil comes in one way or another.

We could not have a better illustration of this than the example of King Saul. He had fallen into disgrace with God,

and, instead of trying to make his peace, he endeavoured to find out what was to happen to him by consulting the witch of Endor. He found out the future, it is true; but it was a dreadful future for him. This is the history given us in the Holy Scriptures. "Saul said to his servants: Seek me a woman that hath a divining spirit, and I will go to her. And his servants said to him: There is a woman that hath a divining spirit at Endor. Then he disguised himself, and put on other clothes; and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said to her: Divine to me by thy divining spirit, and bring me up him whom I shall tell thee. And the woman said to him: Behold, thou knowest all that Saul hath done, and how he hath rooted out the magicians and soothsayers from the land; why, then, dost thou lay a snare for my life, to cause me to be put to death? And Saul swore unto her by the Lord, saying: As the Lord liveth, there shall no evil happen to thee for this thing. And the woman said to him: Whom shall I bring up to thee? and he said: Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice, and said to Saul: Why hast thou deceived me, for thou art Saul? And the King said to her: Fear not, what hast thou seen? And the woman said to Saul: I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said to her: What form is he of? And she said: An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul understood that it was Samuel, and he bowed himself with his face to the ground and adored. And Samuel said to Saul: Why hast thou disturbed my rest that I should be brought up? And Saul said: I am in great distress, for the Philistines fight against me, and God is departed from me, and would not hear me, neither by the hand of prophets nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee that thou mayest show me what I shall do. And Samuel said: Why askest thou me, seeing the Lord has departed from thee, and is gone over to thy rival? For the Lord will do to thee as He spoke by me; and He will rend thy kingdom out of thy hand, and will give it to thy neighbour, David. Because thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord, neither didst thou execute the wrath of His indignation upon Amelec. Therefore hath the Lord done to thee what thou sufferest this day. And the Lord also will deliver Israel with thee into the hands of the Philistines; and to-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me; and the Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines" (I. Kings xxviii. 7). These were the terrible words which the spirit of Samuel spoke to him in answer to his endeavour to find out the future; and we may reasonably fear

some such an answer if we are too curious to discover what God does not think good to tell us.

At the present day people try to gratify their curiosity about the future, and about hidden things, by having recourse to "spiritualists." These spiritualists profess to have communication with the souls of the departed, and to be able to get information from them. The common way in which the spirits are supposed to communicate with those on earth, as I dare say you know, is by "spirit-rapping" or "table-turning," and other such devices. There is great reason to suppose that most of this alleged communication with the other world is all imposture and nonsense. In many instances it has been proved to be mere trickery, but still it does not follow that it is *always* so, and that there may not be a certain amount of truth in it. It is necessary, therefore, to remember that *if* it is true, and *when* it is true, it is distinctly unlawful. We may never attempt to gain information except either directly from God, or by using the ordinary natural means He has placed at our disposal.

As an illustration of the unlawfulness of seeking information through other channels, I will quote the passage of Holy Scripture from which my text is taken: "And Ochozias fell through the lattices of his upper chamber which he had in Samaria, and was sick. And he sent messengers, saying to them: Go, consult Beelzebub, the god of Accaron, whether I shall recover of this my illness. And an angel of the Lord spoke to Elias, the Thesbite, saying: Arise, and go up to meet the messengers of the King of Samaria, and say to them: Is there not a God in Israel that ye go to consult Beezlebub, the god of Accaron? Wherefore thus saith the Lord: From the bed on which thou art gone up thou shalt not come down, but thou shalt surely die" (IV. Kings i. 2).

There is another form of this sin of over curiosity about the future. There are some who do not actually consult fortune-tellers, but are always paying attentions to "omens and dreams." These omens and dreams are supposed to foretel the future; and if you observe them, and are guided by them in your actions, you are trying to make use of unlawful knowledge. Before the Christian religion was known the heathens used to direct their conduct by observing the flight of birds and the appearances found in the bodies of beasts that were sacrificed, and so forth. These things were called omens. Nothing could be done till the omens were favourable, so that the most important affairs of life were regulated by foolish trifles, which everybody now laughs at. Something of this still remains in different parts of the country, and you will often hear sensible

people talk of this thing or the other being lucky or unlucky. It is lucky, for instance, if you see such a bird, or unlucky if such a beast crosses your path; it is lucky to do this and unlucky to see that! All these things are what the Catechism calls fooleries; but, if serious attention is given to them, they become very disastrous fooleries, and are sometimes the cause of much sorrow and sin.

The things I have been speaking of are supposed to be means of knowing the future or finding out hidden things. There is another kind of superstition, on which a few words must be said. "Charms and spells," as they are called, are means of getting some supernatural assistance. One person, for instance, has a sprig of a tree hidden in his clothes, another carries little objects round his neck or at his girdle to protect him against harm; a third nails a horseshoe over the stable-door to keep out evil influences. These things are called charms, and in different parts of the country you will find many such in use.

"Spells" are something a little different. They are forms of words supposed to produce a magic or supernatural effect when said under certain prescribed conditions.

Now let us ask, What is the harm of all this? Generally, such things are done without much thought or meaning, because it is an old usage which people like to keep up; in such cases you can only say it is not very wise, and it is the best to let foolish practices drop quietly. If, however, you were seriously to attach importance to such things, and expect good from them, you would be doing wrong. You certainly do not expect any *natural* good to come from doing these things. What possible good *naturally* can come from a piece of a tree, or from a foolish form of words? You do not expect any good from Almighty God; you do not even mean to ask Him for anything, or apply to Him all. If, then, any good *really* comes to you, it is clear that it must be granted by some power independent of God, and opposed to Him. It is plain, therefore, that all these things, if carried out to their conclusion, involve something like a false religion, or worship of the devil.

But now I must answer an objection, which is often enough made to the practices of the Catholic Church. People will say: "You are very hard upon charms and so forth; but, after all, are not the crosses and scapulars and medals which Catholics wear much the same thing?" "If you carry about with you relics of the saints, are they not charms, just as much as sprigs of mountain-ash would be?" The difference in reality is perfectly obvious on consideration. You have about you the crucifix and our Lady's medal, and you expect some kind of protection from

them; you expect it, however, distinctly and directly from God. By wearing these objects of piety you mean that you put yourself specially under the protection of God, and that you appeal confidently to Him for help. The things you carry with you have, perhaps, been blessed—that is, prayer has been made by the Church to God for those who wear them. If you place a confidence in these things you are, directly or indirectly, trusting to prayer, and expecting good from the power of God. Such a trust may become presumptuous, if it is not accompanied by proper dispositions: for example, if you were to persevere in a life of sin, and hoped to escape the punishment of your sins by wearing medals and crosses; but the trust *in itself* is always right.

It is necessary to observe, at the same time, that prayers and the pious usages I have been describing may be used in a superstitious *manner*. For example, if you wore a medal and expected good to come from, say, the particular part of your dress in which you wore it, or if you said certain prayers, and thought their virtue depended, not on the devotion with which you said them, but the order in which they were arranged, these would be superstitious practices.

I began by speaking of the grievous sin of any compact with the devil, or of any worship given to him. I will finish this part of the subject by saying a word about something which has a great analogy to worship of the devil—I mean the conduct of those who are doing the devil's work on earth. There are, unfortunately, a great many who have made no compact with the devil, but pass their lives in doing his work of opposing God and promoting evil. People do this by giving scandal, and making others bad, and so taking away souls from Christ. Sometimes this is done through malice, with a real design of fighting against God; sometimes it is mere carelessness and neglect. Those who lead evil lives themselves, and are setting a bad example to their neighbours, are leading away souls from Christ by their carelessness just as effectually as if they actually intended to do so. It is plain that all those who are doing the devil's work on earth, either by design or by carelessness, are really his servants and worshippers, and can only expect some day to have their portion with him.

There are two other sins which come under the First Commandment. The Catechism tells us that: "All sins of *sacrilege* and *simony* are forbidden by the First Commandment." These are sins which are directly against the worship of God, by profaning and dishonouring things which belong to God, and to His service.

The sin of sacrilege is any act of violence against anything consecrated to God, or any insult offered to things used in His service. Any abuse of such things is plainly a great sin of irreverence against God, to whom they are consecrated.

There are three ways in which the sin of sacrilege may be committed. First, by violence to the ministers of God. Violence offered to any one consecrated to God is not merely a sin against an individual, but is also an affront to Almighty God. We have an illustration of this in the Old Testament history. We are told that a man of God came from Juda to King Jeroboam as he was standing before the altar at Bethel burning incense. This prophet came with a message from God, and a prophecy, and "when the King had heard the word of the man of God, which he had cried out against the altar in Bethel, he stretched forth his hand from the altar saying: Lay hold on him. And his hand which he stretched forth against him withered, and he was not able to draw it back again to him" (III. Kings xiii. 4). Here we see how God Himself miraculously avenged the violence that the King proposed to offer to the prophet who spoke to him in God's name. The honour due to God requires that those who are charged with His ministry should be treated with respect, not merely for their own sakes, but out of reverence to the office they hold. For this reason any act of violence against a priest is a sin of sacrilege, and is punished by the Church with excommunication.

The next kind of sacrilege is any offence offered to *places* consecrated to God. In the Old Law God chose His sanctuary upon earth, and consecrated it by the special display of His presence there. He deigned to call the Temple of Jerusalem His house, and to establish His mercy-seat in the Holy of Holies.

Any offence against this place was a sacrilege, and was one of the greatest crimes that man could commit. In the New Law we have in our churches a far more *real* presence of God than there ever was in the Jewish Temple, and any irreverence to the church—for example, any crime committed in it—is, in some degree or other, a sin of sacrilege, by profaning a place sacred to the majesty of God. Here, again, we have an example from the Old Law which it will be interesting to give. This time it was Ozias, the King of Juda, who was punished for his sacrilege. He was a powerful King, and he had collected a large army, and succeeded in all his undertakings. "When he was made strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction: and he neglected the Lord his God: and, going into the Temple of the Lord, he had a mind to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And imme-

diately Azarias, the priest, going in after him, and with him four score priests of the Lord, most valiant men, withstood the King, and said: It doth not belong to thee, Ozias, to burn incense to the Lord, but to the priests—that is, to the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated for His ministry: go out of the sanctuary, do not despise: for this thing shall not be accounted to thy glory by the Lord God. And Ozias was angry: and, holding in his hand the censer to burn incense, threatened the priests. And presently there arose a leprosy in his forehead before the priests, in the house of the Lord, at the altar of incense. And Azarias, the high priest, and all the rest of the priests, looked upon him and saw the leprosy in his forehead, and they made haste to thrust him out. Yea, himself also, being frightened, hasted to go out, because he had quickly felt the stroke of the Lord" (II. Paral. xxvi. 16).

Here you have a King punished by the leprosy, in the height of his power, for a sin of sacrilege—for a double sin of sacrilege, we may say—first, for profaning the holy place by presuming to offer incense, and then for an insult to God's ministers by threatening the priests who warned him of his duty. There is still another sort of sacrilege which consists in making a profane use of holy *things*—that is, of things consecrated to God. Of this, also, there are a great many illustrations in the Holy Scripture. We read, for example, how Achan brought down the anger of God upon the whole people because he took for himself a part of the plunder of Jericho, which had been solemnly consecrated to God. It is, then, a very great sin—a sacrilege—to offer any violence or profane usage to persons, places, or things consecrated to God; and it is a sin which is sure to bring down, in a special manner, the anger of God upon those who commit it.

I cannot leave the subject without saying a word on the kind of sacrilege which is the most common amongst Christians. It is a sacrilege to receive the Sacraments unworthily. These are the most sacred things of all. They are the means of grace, and the channels by which the merits of the Precious Blood of our Lord are communicated to men. If you receive one of these Sacraments unworthily you are guilty of a sacrilege. If you make a bad confession you are guilty of sacrilege; still more, if you make an unworthy Communion you commit a sacrilege. If you do this you are, indeed, profaning the holy things of God—you are turning to His dishonour the most precious things He has given us for His own worship and the salvation of our own souls.

I have only now to speak of the sin of simony. This is one

particular way in which the holy things of God are profaned. Simony means trafficking in holy things—buying and selling holy things. It is called by this name from the name of Simon Magus, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles. Simon had been a magician, but was converted to the Christian faith by the preaching of Philip. St. Peter came to Samaria and laid hands upon the new converts, and they received the Holy Ghost; "and when Simon saw that by the imposition of the Apostles the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying: Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said to him: Keep thy money to thyself to perish with thee, because thou hast thought the gift of God may be purchased with money" (Acts viii. 18). It is a sin of simony to give or take money in exchange for spiritual things. You must not think that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

It is a great offence against God to make holy things a matter of trade. You remember the indignation of our Lord against those who made the Temple a place for buying and selling. "My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."

There is, indeed, something peculiarly odious and offensive of trafficking in holy things. It is, however, necessary to remark that in one sense it is not wrong to buy them. You may, for instance, buy or sell crucifixes or medals, or other objects of devotion; but, then, you must buy them simply for their value as so much silver, or as works of art, or for their history, or as archæological curiosities, but not for the blessing or indulgences attached to them. There would be no harm in buying or selling a silver medal, but it would be a sin of simony if you sold it at a higher price, because it had been blessed by the Pope, or had some spiritual privilege attached to it. The silver and the workmanship you may buy, but the blessing or indulgence you may not buy.

Again, it is not simony if you pay the usual fees on occasion of receiving some of the Sacraments. If, for example, you make a suitable offering to the priest when your children are baptized you are not buying the Sacrament, but merely doing your duty by contributing to the support of your pastors in a way recognized by the Church.

Now to conclude: I have said how abominable in the sight of the Lord is anything like buying or selling holy things; what a terrible sin must it be to make your religion a matter of money! This is one of the great dangers, however, to which a great many of the poor are exposed. There are never wanting

tempters who are ready to seduce people from their faith by offering them money, or money's worth. Such people would buy the souls and consciences of men—and, unfortunately, many are to be found who will make a traffic of their consciences. Such people are ready to go to one church or another for what they can get, and will sell their souls to the highest bidder. When once this spirit of self-seeking and looking for gain in religion takes possession of a man, it is, indeed, hard for the grace of God to produce any fruit in him. Whatever you may be, try, at least, to be free from covetousness in the service of God, and should a tempter ever come in your way, let your answer be: "Keep thy money to perish with thee, because thou has thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money!"

SERMON XLI.

Devotion to the Saints.

"Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (St. Matt. xix. 28).

THIS glorious promise which our Lord made to His Apostles leads very naturally to a subject I have omitted—that is, to considering the honour and devotion which ought to be paid to the saints. It would hardly be necessary to speak on this subject at all, if it were not for the very undue importance attached to it by Protestants.

The thing is perfectly simple in itself, but we are surrounded by people who have taken up extraordinary misapprehensions and prejudices about it, and I must, therefore, go into the question carefully, so as to leave no room for misunderstanding. Protestants are very much scandalized at what they are pleased to consider the excessive honour paid to the saints, and are offended by the reverence shown to holy images and other memorials of Christ and His saints.

Acting upon this prejudice, they have thought it necessary to adopt a new division of the Commandments, in order to make stronger what was sufficiently strong already. They make the two parts of the First Commandment—"Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me," and "thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing. . . . . Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them"—into two distinct commandments, whereas it is plain that, not to have strange gods, and not to adore graven things come to the same thing, or, at any rate, that the one includes the other.

As I have said, there is no difficulty at all in the question. I have already spoken of the supreme honour—the honour given to God alone, which no creature can share with Him.

It is manifest that besides this honour there *must* be another kind of honour—that is, *some* kind of honour which *can* properly be given to creatures. We read about this kind of honour in every page of the Holy Scriptures—if we wanted any authority for what common sense tells us. St. Paul says: "Render, therefore, to all men their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Rom. xiii. 7). And St. Peter says:

"Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God, honour the King" (I. St. Peter ii. 17).

These two sorts of honour are manifestly different in *kind*, not in *degree;* that is, one kind of honour is not merely *greater* than the other, but it is a different sort of thing altogether. The reason of this is that the honour given to God arises from feelings which we cannot have for any creature. We honour God because He is the original source and fountain of all being and of all good. "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration" (St. James i. 17).

Every good thing that exists is from Him, and exists only through Him. "By Thy will they were, and were created." If we see and admire anything in creation, we know it comes from God, and that it is in reality only a faint reflection of His infinite beauty and grandeur. God made them and gave to them all their beauty, and it is by His power that they are preserved and kept in being. The Psalmist says: "How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is filled with Thy riches. So is this great sea which stretched wide its arms: there are creeping things without number, creatures little and great. There the ships shall go. This sea dragon which Thou hast formed to play therein. All expect of Thee that Thou give them food in season. What Thou givest to them they shall gather up: when Thou openest Thy hand they shall all be filled with good. But if Thou turnest away Thy face they shall be troubled: Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail and shall return to their dust. Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Psalm ciii. 24). God is not only the Creator and Preserver of all creatures, and the source of all excellence; but He also has infinite rights over *us*, since "He has made us, and not we ourselves." In feelings like this no creature can have any share, and if we are to honour them at all it must be on some totally different motives, and in an entirely different manner.

Let us consider for a moment what is the real ground on which we honour creatures.

Whatever position creatures may hold, we can only honour them on *one* ground—that is, *on account* of what God has been pleased to give to them, and in proportion to the extent and excellence of His gifts to them. Take any one of the creatures whom you think it right to honour, and you will see that you are honouring it simply on account of the physical, or the intellectual, or moral qualities that God has given to it; or perhaps it

is because of the *position* in which God has placed this creature amongst men—but, anyway, exclusively on account of God's gifts. You honour your parents, because God has given them that particular relation to you; you honour the Queen, because it is the will of God that she should reign over you; you honour heroes and sages, great thinkers, and writers, because God has bestowed on them qualities above their fellow-men.

It is plain that the same sort of honour *must* be given to the saints, and for the very same reasons. The saints are those of all His creatures to whom God has given the choicest of His gifts. He has given them the greatest spiritual graces and the highest position, and He has made them His favourites; how can we possibly refuse to honour them? The honour is in substance exactly the same as the honour we give to all other creatures, and only differs accidentally in as much as it relates more immediately and directly to God.

If it is right and reasonable—as it certainly is—to pay every honour to our Queen, because it has pleased God to set her to rule over us, and to endow her with qualities to make her worthy to reign—how, in consistency and common sense, can we refuse to give honour to the Blessed Virgin, whom God chose to be "blessed amongst women," and whom He raised to the dignity of Mother of His Incarnate Son? If "He that is mighty hath done great things" for her, greater than were even done for any other creature, what right have we to refuse our tribute of honour and reverence?

In the same way, if it is right and reasonable to honour the heroes and sages of the world—those to whom God has given the power and talent to rise to eminence amongst their fellows—how can we refuse our respect to those whom, as our Lord tells us, are to "sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"?

But people will say, "*Honouring* the saints and servants of God is one thing; *praying* to them is another." Let us see. Is it anything *exceptional* that we should ask the saints for favours and get them? Is it not the *rule* throughout God's creation that creatures should help one another, and do good to one another, both in temporal and spiritual things?

The greatest part of the good things for body and soul which we receive comes to us through the hands, and by the instrumentality, of other creatures. The care and protection we require in childhood, the necessary nourishment for our bodies, are given to us by creatures. So it is with our souls. A religious education, the greatest of all spiritual blessings, is given to us by creatures. It is our fellow-men who teach,

exhort, and supply to us the means by which we are to get God's grace. We know, indeed, that "all good gifts," both spiritual and temporal, really come to us from God, but that does not prevent us from looking to our fellow-creatures for them. We do not hesitate to ask for favours, and we expect to receive them. Why, then, should people talk as if the idea of asking for favours from the saints, or getting them, were something very new and unheard of, whereas it is quite in the routine of God's creation?

No one dreams of there being anything unlawful or unreasonable in asking for things from those in high places upon earth; on the contrary, you feel, at once, that receiving petitions and granting favours belong naturally to the position they hold. Why, then, should there be anything unlawful or unreasonable in presenting such petitions to those who are "reigning with Christ" in heaven?

But there are two objections which are commonly made against the Catholic practice of invoking the saints. The first of these is that by so doing we are interfering with the office of Mediator, which belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ; the other, that it is impossible for the saints to hear the prayers that are made to them in all parts of the earth.

You often hear Protestants quote the words of St. Paul: "For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (I. Tim. ii. 5); or, again: "And therefore He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of His death . . . . they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. ix. 15).

All this is perfectly true. Our Lord is our only Mediator, and "there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby they may be saved" (Acts iv. 12). But, what has all this to do with prayer? We are to pray for ourselves and for our neighbours. If we pray for our brethren we are not thereby constituting ourselves mediators in place of Christ. Whatever is asked of God by Christians on earth, or by saints in heaven—whether for themselves or for others—is always asked for through the merits of our Lord. St. Paul, when he was on earth, was, as he tells us, perpetually praying for his converts, and begging them to pray for him.

Let us see what he says: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, that you help me in your prayers to God for me" (Rom. xv. 30). "Wherefore I also, hearing of your faith that is in the Lord Jesus, and of your love towards all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making commemoration of you in my

prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him" (Eph. i. 15). And again: "Grace be to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for you all, making a remembrance of you in our prayers without ceasing" (I. Thess. i. 2). It is clear that St. Paul never for a moment considered this mutual prayer to be any interference with our Lord's office of Mediator. He might pray, and he did constantly pray, whilst he was upon earth; why should he *cease* to pray for them when he finished his course and received his crown of justice? If his one great object on earth was, by labour and prayer, to win souls to Christ, is he likely to forget that object when he has entered into his reward and is reigning with Christ? If St. Paul and all other saints go on praying for Christians as they did whilst on earth, why may we not continue to ask their prayer, without in any way interfering with the special privilege of our Redeemer?

But, then, objectors will go on: It is no use praying to the saints, since they cannot hear petitions. Why should they *not* hear petitions? It is true we cannot understand *how* they are to hear; but then we cannot form any sort of idea of a spiritual existence. It is quite clear that the saints and angels in heaven know whatever God wills them to know of what passes upon earth. "There shall be joy before the angels of God over one sinner doing penance." It is clear, then, that God *does*, in some way, enable them to understand what goes on upon earth —even things concealed in the hearts of men. It would be difficult to find a better illustration of the sympathy and prayers of the saints than that given us by St. John. "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them, and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little time till their fellow-servants and their brethren, who are to be slain even as they, should be filled up" (Apoc. vi. 10).

I have spent some time in considering this subject, because we all ought to have a clear answer ready to give when required—but in reality the answers of the Catechism are so plain as not to need any comment. "It is forbidden to give to the angels and saints divine honour or worship, for this belongs to God alone." "We should pay to the angels and saints an inferior honour or worship, for this is due to them as the servants and special friends of God."

The Church in heaven and the Church on earth are bound together into one great hierarchy by bonds of mutual reverence and love, and by constant, unceasing prayer one for the other through the merits, and under the headship of our one Lord and Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ. "You are come to Mount Sion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the Church of the first-born, who are written in the heavens, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of the blood which speaketh better than that of Abel" (Heb. xii. 22).

There is another part of the subject which I cannot pass over hastily. The Catechism says: "We should give to relics, crucifixes, and holy pictures an inferior and relative honour, as they relate to Christ and His saints, and are memorials of them." There is, I suppose, nothing in the Catholic faith about which more hard things have been said than the devotion to holy images. It would seem as if Protestants could *never* understand it—and yet it is in reality the most simple common sense that can be imagined.

Besides the "inferior honour" given to the saints, and also given—as I have explained—to people on earth in their degree, there is another kind of honour. This is called *relative* honour. It is clear that the honour you give to a man and the honour which you give to a picture are quite different. You honour a man because of certain qualities which he possesses. You think he has talents or virtues, or he is in some distinguished position, or has made himself a name. A picture can have none of these qualities. If you honour it at all, it is only because it is the representation of some person for whom you entertain love or reverence. It is a "relative honour"—that is, an honour given a thing without life, *not* for itself, but to be *handed on* or *referred to* something else, which is *really* the object of honour. For example, if you pay honour to the crucifix you certainly do not mean to reverence the wood or the metal of which it is made; you certainly do not mean to honour the beauty of the carving; the outward marks of respect you show are intended to express the love and reverence you feel for our Lord, whom the crucifix represents.

All this is seen in every-day life. Go into any house you please, you will be sure to find pictures of the Queen, pictures of parents, of children, and others dear to the household. Such pictures are treated with respect, and sometimes with marks of tenderness. No one thinks of finding fault with this, or

imagines for a moment that any one will confuse between the pictures and those whom they represent. Again, we constantly hear of statues being solemnly unveiled; and, if the statue represents a sovereign, or some one loved by the people, you would not be surprised to hear of a great burst of loyalty and enthusiasm from the bystanders on the occasion. Common sense tells you that all the respect shown to the statue is *relative* honour: that is, it is meant not for the statue, but for the person whom it represents. It is only in religion that this common sense is laid aside, and people choose to imagine that because we show marks of reverence to the images of Christ and His saints, therefore we are making them objects of worship.

The feeling which Protestants at the present day have about holy images is not a new thing. In the early ages the Church had to suffer a long and bitter persecution from the Iconoclasts. Several of the Greek Emperors took the same view that Protestants now take, and sent their soldiers into the churches to break and remove all the images of Christ and His saints.

A story is told of the Abbot Stephen which shows the reasonableness of the Catholic practice. The holy Abbot was brought a prisoner before the Emperor Constantine. The Emperor said to him: "Can you suppose that you are injuring Christ by trampling on the crucifix?" By way of answer the Abbot produced a coin with the Emperor's image on it. "What would a man deserve for trampling on the Emperor's image?"—the bystanders replied: "He would deserve the punishment of treason." The Abbot cast it on the ground and trampled upon it with these words: "If I deserve punishment for so treating the image of an earthly King, how much more should I deserve it if I dishonoured the image of the King of Kings?"

The only way in which the Emperor could answer this argument was by putting him to death. It is, indeed, unanswerable. Every one would feel that a mark of intentional respect or disrespect shown to his own portrait was really a mark of respect or disrespect shown to himself. The same principle obviously applies to holy pictures.

What I have said about images and pictures applies also to relics and other things without life. Relics are "*remains*"—that is, parts of the bodies of the saints, or things which they have left behind them on earth. It has been the practice of the Christian Church from the earliest ages to pay the greatest reverence to the relics of saints, and to look for favours from God on account of them. There are a number of instances given in the Holy Scriptures in which it has pleased God to work miracles by the instrumentality of relics of saints. For

example, we are told that the prophet "Eliseus died, and they buried him. And the rovers from Moab came into the land the same year. And some that were burying a man saw the rovers, and cast the body into the sepulchre of Eliseus. And when it had touched the bones of Eliseus, the man came to life and stood upon his feet" (IV. Kings xiii. 20).

Origen, one of the earliest fathers of the Greek Church, says: "And no wonder if a saint sanctify, by the word of God and prayer, the food which we partake, when even the very garments with which he is clothed are holy. The handkerchiefs and aprons of Paul derived so much holiness from his purity, that when applied to the bodies of the sick, they drove away diseases and restored health: and of Peter, what shall I say, the very shadow of whose body bore with it so much holiness, that whomsoever, not he, but his shadow only touched, was at once relieved from every ailment."

The father refers to the account of St. Peter and St. Paul, Acts v. 14, and xix. 11.

The devotion to the saints, and especially to the Blessed Virgin Mary, is meant to be an assistance in the service of God. Devotion given to them is not so much taken from God to be given to creatures, but it is a means of raising our minds and hearts to Him. How can it be otherwise? Every saint shows forth in some degree the greatness and glory of God, and is, if we may say so, a faint reflection of His infinite majesty—"God is wonderful in His saints," the Psalmist tells us—and you cannot be devout to the saints, and admire their virtues, and ask their prayers without being led on to an increased devotion to Him from whom all their excellence came and who was the end of all their aspirations.

It is the same with holy pictures and other objects of devotion. The one end of them all is to make you devout to Almighty God. They are calculated to put you in mind of God and of your salvation.

The world is constantly calling away your thoughts to external affairs. You have business or amusement perpetually engaging your attention from heavenly things, and it is very hard for the best of us to remember them as we ought. St. Paul says: "If you be risen with Christ, see the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth" (Col. iii. 1).

It is difficult to "mind the things that are above"—whilst the "things that are upon the earth" are so constantly and vividly presented before our senses, and anything that tends to raise our

thoughts to heaven is of value to us. It is very useful, therefore, for Christians to have about them, and to keep in their houses, things which are likely, from time to time, to raise their minds to God, and to make them think of their last end. It looks very bad in a Catholic household to see no outward sign of religion. If there is no crucifix, no picture of our Blessed Lady, and no external evidence of the faith and piety of those who live in the house, it is always to be feared that they are forgetting their faith or keeping it out of sight.

At the same time, you must not allow external things to become a hindrance to devotion. These things affect people differently: some feel a great need of outward helps to fix their attention; whilst others are not so dependent on them, and would be, perhaps, embarrassed by a great number of external objects. Let each one, then, use such things, so as to suit his own devotion, and to be a help, not a hindrance—always, however, taking care to keep within the ordinary usages of the Catholic Church.

It ought to be the great desire of all Catholics to follow not merely the letter of the law, but the spirit of the Catholic Church in all things.

If we do this, we certainly shall not be wanting in a tender and earnest devotion to the saints of God, or in confidence in their intercession. Especially we must learn to imitate the deep devotion to the Blessed Mother of God which the Church displayed on all occasions. Throughout the whole year we have a succession of beautiful feasts in her honour, by which the Church would urge us on to a constantly-increasing devotion to her.

We shall see that we cannot show too much honour to the Blessed Virgin if we will only consider how the Son of God honoured her by being "subject" to her in the holy house of Nazareth; that we cannot have too great a love for her, if we remember her as the one great object of our Lord's tenderest love on earth; and we cannot have too great confidence in her intercession when we remember that almost His last words on the cross were to commend her to us as a Mother, and to commend us to her as her children: "Son, behold thy Mother; Mother, behold thy Son."

I cannot conclude without saying one word about the most holy of all symbols—the cross. This is the one which leads us most directly to thoughts of our Lord Jesus Christ. If it is our desire to know "Jesus and Him crucified" we can do nothing better than be devout to His cross.

The sign of the cross has been the symbol of the Christian

Church since the earliest ages; and we are proud that it is our distinguishing mark at the present day. St. Cyril says: "Let us not, therefore, be ashamed of the cross of Christ; but, even though another hide it, do thou openly seal it on thy brow, that the devils, beholding that royal sign, may flee far away trembling. But make thou this sign when thou eatest and drinkest, sittest or liest down, risest up, speakest, walkest—in a word, on every occasion; for He who was here crucified is above in the heavens." What St. Cyril said to the Christians of the fourth century is, my dear brethren, a suitable exhortation for us in the nineteenth.

In the crucifix you have not only this holy sign, but the figure of Him who sanctified it. Our Lord Jesus Christ made this cross the altar of His sacrifice. He made it the symbol of His victory, and from it He continually speaks to the heart of men. "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to Myself" (St. John xii. 32).

You can have nothing better to help you, my dear brethren, in the midst of turmoil and temptation, than the loving use of this most sacred image. If you have it constantly before you, and meditate on it with devotion, it cannot fail to raise you up above this earth, and strengthen in your hearts the love of that sweet Saviour whom it represents. Amen.

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